



The Compassionate Friends

Greater New Orleans Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 5

May 2025

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

A BEREAVED MOTHER IS...

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who stands at a grave wondering how she is going to live the rest of her life without this child.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who thinks she will spend the rest of her life with this horrendous feeling inside.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who has to learn how to live all over again.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who wishes they would take Mother's Day out of the calendar.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who has to learn to accept the loss of her beloved child and uses what she has learned to help others.

A Bereaved Mother Is someone who can again learn to smile, to look forward to the future and get excited again because her Compassionate Friends were there when she needed them.

Zel Hester TCF Atlanta, GA.

TCF Greater New Orleans Chapter Picnic and Butterfly Release

Our 2025 Picnic and Butterfly Release was truly a successful event with great weather for the day and excellent support from our members and community. It was heart-warming to see so many members, friends, and families. Thank you to all the readers and performers who truly put their heart into the event. Thank you to our SPECIAL GUEST – The Madhatter. Chris Jason Advant does a wonderful job portraying the character, The Madhatter. So many people were taking pictures throughout the event. If you have photos you would like to share please send them to us at tcfnola@gmail.com. We will add them to our website photo section. **See page 4 for photo highlights.**

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. **The April Birthday Cake was sponsored by Christi Vercher in memory of son, John "Jay" Lawson V. The May Birthday Cake will be co-sponsored by Stacie Coates in memory of brother, Robert "Bobby" Joseph Coates, Jr., and also sponsored by Debbie Glory-Maxwell in memory of her daughter, Christina Margiotta Schnell.**

Grief is hard, and most people won't know what to do. This will cause some to say the wrong thing. This will cause other say nothing at all. - Liz Newman

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:

May 12, 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

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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

MAY: THE UNUSUALLY DIFFICULT MONTH

For the bereaved parent, May is frequently the cruelest month. The month of May offers the rest of the world a promise of another carefree summer, swimming, family vacations, relaxation, reading, cook-outs and picnics, trips to the lake and so much that is inherent in our culture.

Yet May also brings memories of our children. The common denominator for mothers (and fathers) is Mother's Day. This tradition was wonderful when our children were alive; now the direct mail and newspaper advertising, sentimental television spots, in-store promotions, cards and letters and the countdown to the day itself are very cruel reminders of our lost children. Who will remember us on Mother's Day?

This will be my fourth Mother's Day without my son. I miss him terribly all year long, but May and December are the worst months for me. First we have Mother's Day, then my son's birthday and throughout the month I am bombarded with invitations for high school and college graduations.....each one reminding me of what once was.

My son finishing grade school, high school, college, graduate school. Each was accompanied by a ceremony. All the ceremonies rush into my mind as I realize how much of myself is my memories and those memories are very entwined with my son's life. A big part of me died with him that night in December.

Three years ago I was overwhelmed, sobbing, still occasionally in deep shock. My mind was mush, my heart was crushed and I did not have the will to do much more than quietly weep. It was my first Mother's Day without my son, the first birthday that he wasn't here, the first Memorial Day Weekend without him. I was paralyzed. May would never be joyful for me again.

What to do....what to do. I ask myself this question each April as we begin the ramp up to the longest month. This year, I am counting out the last days of April and wondering how I will handle it. I am not worried about it; I am just wondering. I have gotten used to the transformation that has taken place in my mind, heart and soul. I experienced a slow spiritual awakening which accompanied a deep, deep sense of loss over which I have no control. I go with it.

There are questions that we must ask ourselves. The answers are unique to us. Collectively we know this is a month to dread; individually we have our own memories and our own methods of coping. Collectively we lean on each other for hope, comfort and support. Individually, we each walk our own road depending on how many circumstances of life are in our month of May: Mother's Day, Memorial Day, birthdays, death anniversaries, graduations, weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations, how we handled the beginning of summer, the end of the school year.....all of these events can bombard us in May.

The memories float into our minds like a mist that thickens into a heavy fog. We are enveloped in our fog of memories; the before death years come to us in a hodgepodge of the happiest times and clash with the reality of now. These are our memories, our children and ultimately our choices. And there seems to be little joy we can take from this month of memories.

Once again, we make the decision. If we are not ready to acknowledge Mother's Day, we shouldn't do it. If we are facing other days in May that will tear at our hearts, we must plan for it. Some of us prefer to be alone and isolated. Others of us prefer to be with friends or family. Some of us go to the cemetery, others go to the park. Some read, watch movies, sit on the deck or simply rest. Others take a weekend trip which puts them into a different state of reality.

There are as many choices as there are parents who have lost their children. Consider your options. Be honest with yourself. Don't be pushed into anything. Take control. We each move forward toward hope at a different rate and in a different way. This is not about meeting the expectations of others; this is a personal journey toward peace and hope. It is your journey.

I will always miss my son. I will always feel deep sorrow at his uncompleted life. But I know that he would want me to move forward, move back into the sunshine that is life on this earth. I'm working on it. Be patient with me. This is the most difficult road I have ever walked, but I am in motion, moving mostly forward and seeking something akin to peace, hope and tranquility. I will always be a work in progress.

Annette Mennen Baldwin (Deceased)
TCF, Todd's Mom

Your absence brings a deep and lingering ache, but your love persists here too, a bond that will never break, that will comfort and continue. So, it seems no matter what I do, my heart will always look for you. In everything I do. In every memory, old and new. My heart will always look for you. - by Liz Newman

TCF Greater New Orleans Chapter Picnic and Butterfly Release Photos

Our butterfly release on Sunday, April 27th was a beautiful remembrance of our children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters – loved ones gone too soon. Over 100 people attended our wonderful event. The Painted Lady butterflies put on a great show – flying up in the air or landing on people’s hair, clothes, arms, hands!! Seeing them reminded us that butterflies are “signs of new life” and “symbols of hope” that our children are living in another dimension with greater beauty and freedom. The weather held out for the entire program, but once we were done, the skies opened up and the rain poured down. The few left who helped to pack up were completely drenched. But it was a beautiful day!



Butterfly Release Stage



Blessing of the bricks



Bitouns poem reading



Susan singing



Debbie singing



Opening Butterfly Box



Poem reading



Special Guest – The Madhatter



Our ladies strong!



Beautiful Butterfly



Our Beautiful Park

NEWSLETTER DEDICATION IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Lauren Ann Brocato

May 30, 1985 – February 27, 2016

Happy Heavenly Birthday Lauren!

Lauren made me laugh, made me proud,

Made me cry, seen me cry, and cried with me,

Hugged me tight, seen me fail, and cheered me up,

Kept me on my toes and has driven me crazy at times.

Lauren was always there for me when I needed her

She will live in my heart forever and I miss her every day

Love Mom, Dad, and Jake



Dedication sent in by Eileen Brocato

NEWSLETTER DEDICATION IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Robert J Coates, Jr.

May 25, 1981 ~ January 20, 2018

Always in my Heart

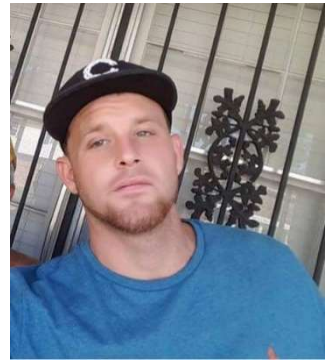
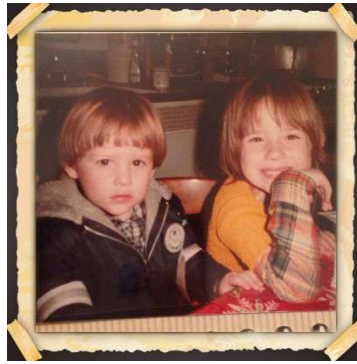


Sometimes in life there are losses. Losses that can never really be replaced. Losing you has been the hardest thing I've ever had to live with. I wasn't ready to say goodbye. I wasn't ready to let you let you leave. I would give anything for just one more day, just one more second. But I've learned to trust in unconditional love. Because the one profound thing about death is that love never dies. Some bonds cannot be broken. Because even though you're not physically here, your heart is - it lives on within me. I carry your heart inside mine. I carry it on days when I discover something new. I carried on days when beauty unfolds in the most unexpected places. I carry it on days when I find courage to heal and to grow. I carry it with me – always. Someday we will meet again - and we will no longer be separated by time or space. But until that day, I'll find comfort in knowing you are still with me. Your heart safely tucked inside mine. Some hearts just belong together and nothing will ever change that. I loved you then. I love you now. Always did. Always will. Forever in my mind. Forever in my heart. I will carry you.

Bobby, You will always be a part of everything I do. No passage of time will ever change that. You are loved & missed, beyond measure.

Love, Your Big Sis, Taylor, Chloe & Ryan

Dedication sent in by Stacie Coates



Dark & Light

That grief sneaks up on you when you least expect it.
It doesn't care what you're doing or where you are or who you're with.
It surprises you when that darkness seems to be in every corner of your vision.
That darkness knows when you're seeming to have a good day.
It becomes an old friend that you see once in awhile out of the blue.
That darkness we all feel is like a dark passenger just waiting in the shadows for us to slip up.
But we're afraid to completely let it go.
We're afraid because if we do will we lose all those memories?
Grief is just as strong as happiness.
Darkness is just as needed as the light.
Some days we can squint through the brightness and the light.
But the bad days we can barely see a sliver of the light.
Just keep breathing.
We can't let the darkness envelop us.
We won't let the grief swallow us.
Grief is alive but so is LOVE and so are we.
Let's live in the LOVE for them.
You are not alone.

Jerrie Vicari, Mother of Zane Rainier Vicari, TCF-Greater New Orleans Chapter



NEWSLETTER DEDICATION IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Christina Margiotta (Schnell)

May 14, 1979 – July 29, 2024

Christy's First Birthday in Heaven



Today, the angels sing your name,
And heaven glows with soft, sweet flame.
Dear Christy, though you're far from sight,
You fill my heart with quiet light.

But though your time was far too brief,
You filled our hearts beyond belief.
A thousand moments left to be,
Now live as love inside of me.

I send a kiss upon the breeze,
A whispered prayer among the trees.
I hope you feel my love up there,
Wrapped in every spoken prayer.

Your birthday lives within my soul,
A tender ache, a love made whole.
Forever missed, forever near,
Happy birthday, Christy dear.

Love Mom



Dedication sent in by Debbie Glory-Maxwell



Memorial Newsletter Dedication
Ray Keith Constantine, Jr.
September 28, 1978 ~ May 29, 2021

*May 29th will be 4 years since my son,
Ray Keith Constantine Jr passed away.*

*With all my heart
With every inch of my soul
With every breath I take
I promise to love you forever.*



***Always Missed, Always Loved
Love Mom & Step-father***



Dedication sent in by Mom, JoAnn Giovingo

Lessons on Living with Grief

Here's the thing about grief. You can't really know it completely until you experience it firsthand. It's like visiting the Grand Canyon for the first time. Before I ever visited it I imagined what it would be like from pictures I'd seen and what I'd been told. Ultimately, when I got to the rim of the canyon that first time and began hiking down one of its trails, it was nothing like what I had imagined. Grief is like that, too.

My husband and I lost our 28-year old son Andrew in 2018 to a rare and aggressive kind of cancer. While I have lost aging parents, the kind of grief experienced after losing our son took me to an entirely different place altogether. I've found that even though it's only been three years since our son died, time has helped soften the edges of my sorrow and allowed me to look back at some of the preconceived ideas I had about losing a child and about grief in general.

I know a number of parents who have lost children. Before Andrew died, I had always thought of these parents as being forever sad and unable to enjoy life ever again. I couldn't imagine how they could get up in the morning and complete their day, being so injured by the loss of their child—how could they possibly go on?

Through no choice of my own, I've learned how they go on. Like the Grand Canyon, I've gone to a place that I could never know without visiting it firsthand. And in going there, deep into a canyon of sorrow, I've learned not only what it's like to lose someone who is so dear to me, but I've discovered so much more.

Having traveled to the depths of mourning has given me a different understanding of life. I'm able to connect with others who have experienced this kind of grief. We recognize each other, speak the same language and exist in a vaguely different reality. Having faced a place of profound sadness has enabled me to experience life more fully. It's like when you travel deep enough into the canyon, you find the river. The Dalai Lama says that without experiencing great grief, you can't know great happiness, and I've found that to be true. While I will always grieve the loss of my son, I can also find incredible happiness when I hear the peepers first thing in the spring, when I visit a beautiful garden or when I hear from a close friend from far away.

In the past, I have tiptoed around parents who have lost a child. I was afraid that I'd say the wrong thing. Or worse, I'd remind them of their loss and ruin their day. As if! Trust me when I say that there's nothing you can say that will remind me that Andrew is no longer alive—that knowledge is always there. Even when it's not at the front of my mind, the loss of my son isn't something I will ever forget. I've also hesitated to talk to other people about their loss because I've assumed that they just don't want to discuss it. However, most of the time it helps me to share memories of my son, and I've discovered that other parents welcome talking about their lost love one, too.

The Grand Canyon, like grief, is made up of many different pathways. Some trails stay close to the rim and others crisscross deep into the inner gorge. Each visitor to this place has a different experience, which is also true of grief. There is no right or wrong way to process a devastating loss. After Andrew passed, my husband buried himself in his work while I wanted to go deep and rehash everything that happened. Both ways of coping got us through.

The Canyon is also made up of many geological layers, from the white Kaibab Limestone at the rim to the deep purple Vishnu Schist deep in the inner gorge. These varied layers are thick in some places, thin in others and non-existent in many stretches. In a perfect world, these bands of rock would stack up evenly, one on top of the other, but they don't. When it comes to the phases of processing, grief is like that too. Researchers have identified stages, such as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, that grieving people experience. However, one stage may last a long time, another briefly, and others may not happen at all. These stages may also come and go out of order, can repeat and are often nuanced. Again, every person grieves differently.

I was surprised to find that grief does some really weird stuff to your body and your brain. I know that because in the months after we lost Andrew I had tons of migraines, smell hallucinations and disabling vertigo. I was so achy that I thought I had developed fibromyalgia—until I came across a grief website that told me flat out that it was grief, not fibro. And my brain! In the first few weeks after Andrew died, I was numb. It was amazing that I could function as well as I did at the time, but was later told by a grief counselor that your brain only gives you as much shock as you can handle. As the weeks went on, more grief got though, and I couldn't think straight. There were moments driving when I had absolutely no clue where I was. I was forgetful and couldn't concentrate. The counselor said, "Be careful out there, this is your brain on grief." And so it was.

In experiencing Andrew's passing I learned that grief is universal, and the death of my son doesn't diminish anyone else's loss. More than a couple of times I've had interactions with people who hesitated to talk about losing a parent or a beloved pet fearing that their loss might sound insignificant compared to the passing of my child. Grief isn't a contest. Just because my loss was devastating, it doesn't make your bereavement any less painful, and I'm capable of acknowledging your grief. In fact, I'm more capable now than I ever was.

We're all meant to visit the deep canyon that is grief. Loss is a part of life, and we're meant to experience loss in order to learn and grow. But it's painful. Traveling deep into that canyon can feel endless and scary, but just when you feel like you can't go any deeper, you come across a tiny creek of clear water passing through a grove of willows.

by Lynn Jaffee

Our Children Remembered



Angel Birthdays

Damion McCall	May 5	Son of Shannon McCall
Brandon Sensebe	May 6	Daughter of Patricia Sensebe
Rene James Rachel	May 8	Son of Kathy Rachel
Geri Lynn W. Cheatham	May 8	Daughter of Linda Wilson
John "Buddy" Kemna Jr.	May 9	Brother of Donna Marie Smithey
Jarrold Christopher	May 11	Son of Myra Santos
Christina Margiotta Schnell	May 14	Daughter of Debbie Glory-Maxwell
Beau Charles Tedesco	May 21	Son of Madelyn and Ted Tedesco
D. Conrad Dyer	May 22	Son of Linda Doussan
Richard "Ricky" Smith	May 24	Son of Carole A. Clark
Ronald J. Wroten	May 25	Brother of Melanie and Jim Boudreaux
Robert J. Coates, Jr.	May 25	Brother of Stacie Coates
Gabriela "Gabby" Hebert	May 28	Daughter of Rachel and Todd Hebert
Mario Anderson	May 29	Son of Trinetta and Herbert Anderson
Blake Bassil	May 30	Son of Debbie Bassil
Lauren Ann Brocato	May 30	Daughter of Eileen Brocato
Dennis George Wedge	May 30	Son of Lori Wedge; Grandson of Jeri McMullen; Nephew of Patti Goens; Cousin of Jennifer and Stefany Goens

Angel Anniversaries

Mary Lee Bonura	May 1	Daughter of Judy and Dominick Bonura
Ty'shaunda Riles	May 6	Daughter of Hishaunda Riles
Gertie Marie Beauford	May 8	Sister of Kathy Beauford
Niva Rosa Murillo	May 10	Sister of Millie Hunton
David Allen Ashton, Jr.	May 10	Son of Patsy and David Allen Ashton, Sr.; Sister of Julie
Ana Maria	May 11	Daughter of Carmen Sanchez
Jarrold Christopher	May 12	Son of Myra Santos
Tynia C. Alexander	May 14	Daughter of Charlene Alexander; Sister of Rickie, Jr. and Tiphane Alexander
Kerry Arnold Degeyter	May 17	Daughter of Dee Arnold
Luke Joseph Orgeron	May 17	Son of James Orgeron, Jr.
Brady Michael Palmer	May 17	Son of Kerri Palmer
Rachel Marie Scillitani	May 19	Daughter of Samuel Scillitani
Connor Nicholas McKeithen	May 24	Son of Chris McKeithen; Grandson of Barbara & Terry McKeithen
Blake Bassil	May 25	Son of Debbie Bassil
Dennis George Wedge	May 25	Son of Lori Wedge; Nephew of Patti Goens
John Paul Sicotte	May 25	Son of Steven & Barbara Sicotte
Chester Joseph Reeder, III	May 26	Son of Deborah and Chester Reeder
Ray Keith Constantine, Jr.	May 29	Son of JoAnn Giovingo
Kevin Michael Flock	May 31	Son of Janice and Jim Flock



**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