



The Compassionate Friends

Greater New Orleans Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

January 2026

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 deeply honored to take part each year in The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting. This year, nearly 80 parents, siblings, grandparents, and friends gathered with us at Lafreniere Park to light candles in loving remembrance of our children who died too soon.

As we lit our Candles of Love, we stood in unity with hundreds of thousands of bereaved families around the world, each lighting a candle at 7:00 p.m. in their own time zone—creating a beautiful “**wave of light**” that encircled the earth in memory of our children, grandchildren, brothers, and sisters, *that their light may always shine.*

We are truly grateful to our chapter members who so generously gave their time to help with setup, readings, and teardown. Many members and their families shared picnics, quiet conversations, and heartfelt fellowship, reminding us that even in our grief, we are never alone. Poems, songs, and images of our beloved children were shared and lovingly projected on two large screens, creating a space filled with remembrance, love, and connection.

If you have not yet attended a TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting, we sincerely hope you will consider joining us next year. We also invite you to volunteer for this very special event—an act of service that not only honors our children, but can also bring comfort, connection, and healing to the heart.

See Photos on Page 3

Wishing You a Peaceful Holiday Season and New Year

As we arrive at the close of another year, we know this season may carry a mix of emotions for the families we serve. Holidays can stir tender memories, quiet longings, and moments of deep reflection. For many, the glow of the season shines alongside the ache of missing someone beloved. At The Compassionate Friends, we want you to know that you are not alone as you move gently through this time.

Cont. on Page 3 – See TCF

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 December Birthday Cake was sponsored by Angie and Kevin Calamari in memory of their son Cameron Calamari. The January Birthday Cake will be sponsored by William Hunton in memory of his step-brother Kevin Minchew.**

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 12, 2026

**Lafreniere Park Foundation
Center Conference Room**

7:00 – 9:00 pm

2nd Monday of every month

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

12 Jan 26	9 Feb 26	9 Mar 26
13 Apr 26	11 May 26	8 Jun 26
13 Jul 26	10 Aug 26	14 Sep 26
12 Oct 26	9 Nov 26	14 Dec 26

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

William Hunton
504-251-1938
tcfnola@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 11, 2026 – held in the Children’s Memorial Garden in Lafreniere Park

Memorial Walk and Auction

September 19, 2026 – held in the Children’s Memorial Garden in Lafreniere Park

WorldWide Candle Lighting

December 13, 2026– Held in the VFW Post 3267, 1133 Hickory Ave., Harahan.

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
Memorial Brick Installer	David Ashton

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

Regional Coordinator – William Hunton

(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 2025 Worldwide Candle Lighting



Thank you to our many Readers !!

Continued from Page 1 - TCF

Whether this is your first holiday after the loss of your child, grandchild, or sibling, or you have carried your grief for many years, each season can feel different. There is no right way to navigate these days—only *your* way. If you find comfort in traditions, honor them. If you need new routines or a quieter pace, give yourself that space. Your heart, your memories, and your love are valid in whatever form they take.

As a community, we walk beside one another with understanding born from shared experience. Your willingness to show up—for yourself, for your family, and for one another—continues to inspire us. Throughout the year, thousands of volunteers, and members create safe places for grief to be spoken, heard, and held. We are grateful for the strength, compassion, and hope you bring to this organization.

During this season of lights, may you feel moments of peace, however brief. May memories of your loved one rest softly on your heart. And may you find comfort in knowing that the love you carry is forever, and you never walk this path alone.

From all of us at The Compassionate Friends, we send our heartfelt wishes for gentleness, connection, and hope as we enter the New Year together.

With warmth and compassion,

The Compassionate Friends

SHATTERED HEALING

When my son died, hidden places within me began to reveal themselves. It was as though chambers of secret rooms, that had long housed unhealthy ideologies, protective attitudes, negative beliefs, and a lifetime of acquired heartache began to want out.

I was overwhelmed with emotion and there was nowhere for the feelings to go anymore. Those rooms were dark, obscure, and full to capacity. When the fracture began, it didn't take too long for a full shattering to occur. It exposed everything that had been concealed and it demolished the me that I knew.

A cloud of confusion and despair surrounded every facet of my life. I felt so exposed. I was overwhelmed to the point of utter despair. I also learned that rock bottom has a basement, and it is deep.

MY grief was in control. It was running rampant within and without. It was difficult to accept...but I had to face the anguish. I realized that I had work to do if I wanted control of my life again.

As I was contemplating what I needed to do, I had a monumental epiphany. Before my essence could begin to heal, I had to find a place for the grief. That realization helped me discover that grief is multifaceted. It had attached itself to every part of my life.

The task seemed insurmountable. I also knew if I was going to survive and truly live again, I had no choice but to find strength to combat the grief.

As it subsided and I could see a bit better, I have come to understand that grief is a teacher. It is very personal. Grief is a mirror. It is also a connection to my son. It is chaotic and messy. And ironically, it holds truth. Grief is sharp and painful and exposes the places within us that we need to heal and forgive ourselves for.

Most importantly, I have learned grief IS controllable. With time, understanding, patience and the truth, I made a place...a seat at the table, if you will, for my grief.

Within me I have discovered the power to move forward, despite this unimaginable task I have been given. As I move through the process of finding a new way to live, I am also discovering that grief has become a part of how I love my child, despite his physical absence. On the other side of my grief is love and that love helps me connect to precious memories. On the other side of my grief new bonds of friendship have been formed...with souls I would have never encountered, and old ones have been strengthened and been a great blessing. On the other side of my grief, I have found perspective...I have discovered a boundless reservoir of strength...I see the true beauty of life because I have seen the depths of utter despair...

KRIS LEITNER – MODESTO AREA CHAPTER TCF, GRANT'S DAD.

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 11, 2026 at 10:30 a.m

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, 2026** for the Butterfly Release to be held on **April 1, 2026**. Brick Forms can be found on our Website www.tcfneworleans.com or request one via email at tcfnola@gmail.com.

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

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. – LIZ NEWMAN

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.

*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**

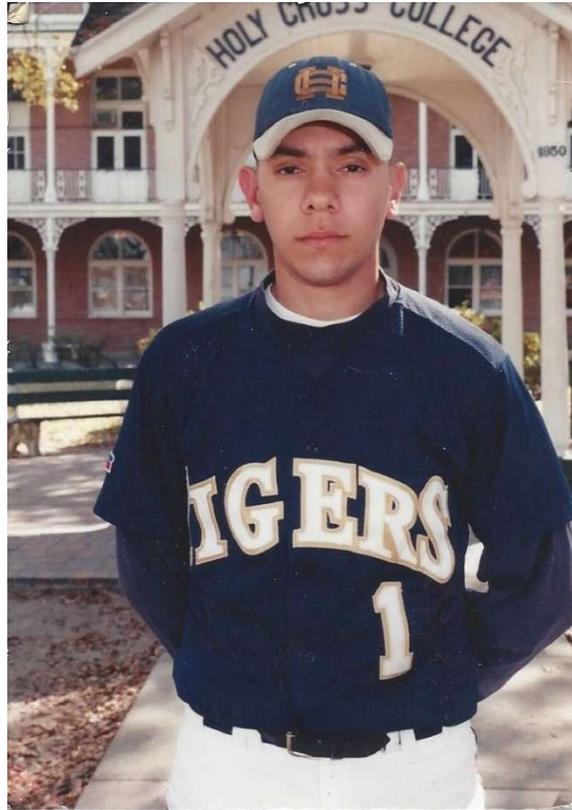
Mom, Drew, & Kayla



Newsletter Dedication in Loving Memory Of My Son

Jonathan Richard Wallace

January 7, 1981 – June 9, 2003



My Dearest Jonathan, Happy 45th Birthday!

I can't imagine that you're 45 yrs old!! It's been 23 yrs since you've been gone.
My heart wishes to see you and talk to you!! I miss you so much Jonathan!!

On your special day, I want to wish you a Happy Happy Birthday!! May your day be filled with love, peace and laughter and may you be surrounded by all your heavenly family and friends!!

Thank you Jonathan for all the years we've spent together: the happy ones which brought us joy, love and laughter, and the difficult ones which helped us grow in Christ!!
Thank you for all the memories!! One day we will see you again!!

WITH ALL OUR LOVE,

Mom, Dad & Jessica

Dedication sent in by Niecy & Stanley Wallace

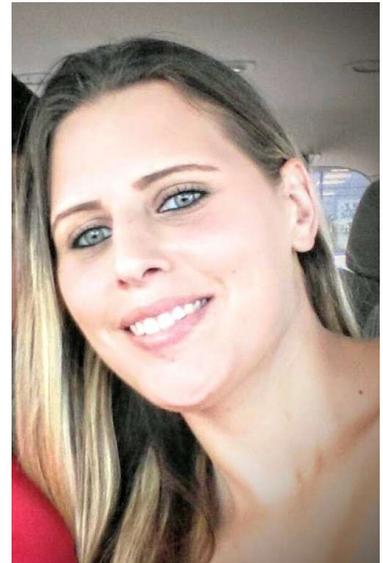


*Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of
Jennifer Marshall*
January 31, 1985 – November 23, 2018



She Is Gone

You can shed tears that she is gone
Or you can smile because she has lived
You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left
Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
Or you can be full of the love that you shared
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday
You can remember her and only that she is gone
Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what she would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.



Happy 41st Birthday in Heaven Baby Girl!!!



Jennifer,

Although we miss you dearly, we also feel you near – in seeing a fairy you would love, in the blue of the sky, in a license plate with your initials, in the hush of missing you. Our thoughts are with your daily. We say your name, talk to you, and tell stories of you daily. But even with all that, we miss the presence of you, your spirit, your beautiful smile, your wisdom, your love, your kindness. . . YOU.

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

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

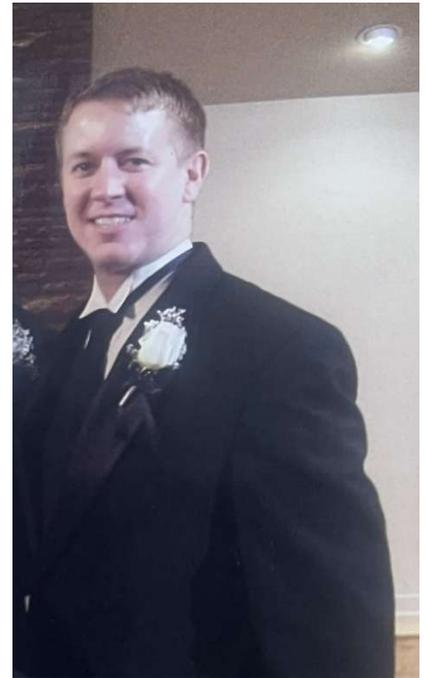
*Memorial Newsletter Dedication in Memory of
Brad Asprion*

January 8, 1970 – October 28, 2025

Brad,

"Happy Birthday to you, Brad.
We love you, miss you and pray
you are spending this birthday with the angels!
Our lives are incomplete without you--

Love Mom & Dad and your entire family



Dedication sent in by Margo & Sonny Asprion



**Love Gift Dedication in Memory of
*Cole Kampmann***

January 24, 2025 – January 24, 2025
Forever in our Hearts, Forever Loved



Dedication for Brittany & Tyler Kampmann



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
Brad Asprien	Jan 5	Son of Margo & Sonny Asprien
Ronald A. Johnston	Jan 9	Son of LaShanda Johnston
Julie Elizabeth Durr	Jan 10	Daughter of Ginny and Hank Durr
Jackelyn Angilee Campbell	Jan 16	Daughter of Rebecca and Keith Campbell
Thernell Simon	Jan 22	Son of Dena and Errol Peters
Kevin Lamar Minchew	Jan 22	Son of Joseph and Sharon Meyers
Cole Kampmann	Jan 24	Son of Brittany & Tyler
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
Gavin Battle	Jan 5	Son of Molly Aldridge
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
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
Susan Lacava	Jan 23	Sister of Debbie Schexnayder
Cole Kampmann	Jan 24	Son of Brittany & Tyler Kampmann
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
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