

The Compassionate Friends Of Northeast Arkansas

Healing Hearts Newsletter

Up on the hill at Southside Community Church, in the Conference Room.

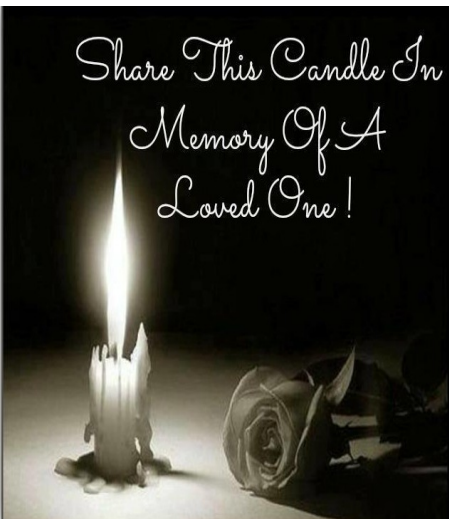
2211 Jones Road, Paragould, AR.

tcfofnortheastarkansas@yahoo.com

Inside This Issue

Valentines Day	1
Coming Events: Guest Speaker	2
Alan Pederson's bio	3
Book "Heavens Child"	4
TFC National Conference	5
Telephone Friends	5
"The Newly Bereaved"	6
"The Newly Bereaved" continued	7
Note from Chapter leader, Toni Baker	8
Our Children Remembered	9
Love Gift Envelope	10

Another holiday, so soon. It seems like we just got off of the emotional rollercoaster of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years and now Valentines Day is upon us. For the past few weeks, it's already started. The stores are full of heart shaped boxes of chocolates, red and white teddy bears, with "I love you" written on them. For many people, seeing the boxes of cards for children to pass out to their friends at school, and the treats they take to share at the class party is very painful. So many young children won't be exchanging cards. Many adults won't receive the home-made cards that only a parent could love. Those who have other children, have to go through the motions, although our hearts are broken. Maybe we will be able to enjoy these days again. But maybe, not this year.



Valentines are many things
A warm and sunny smile,
Loving words that make us feel
Everything is worthwhile,
Neighborly endeavors
To reach out and lend a hand,
Inspiring words of comfort,
Notes that say, "I understand,"
Extra little courtesies,
Sincere and friendly signs

That brighten someone's outlook
All these are Valentine's!

Advisory Board Members

David Lange, Executive Director of The Paragould Housing Authority

Associate Pastor Pat Graham, LMSW

Melissa Phillips, Owner of Bren's Flowers

Crystal Baldwin, MSNFNP-BC

Mariah Bryson, General manager of Zaxby's

Thank you all for being on our board!

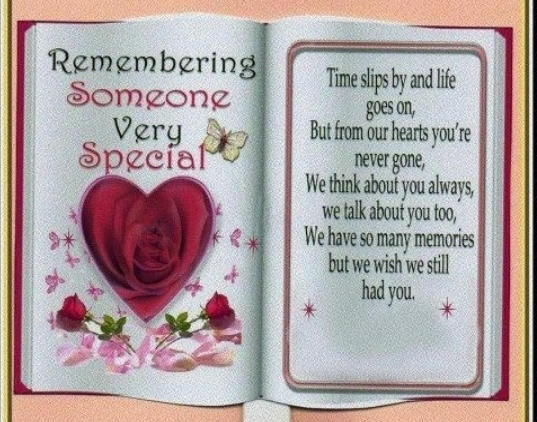
Our next 3 Meetings

March 14, 2013

April 11, 2013

May 9, 2013

Mark Your Calendars!



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TCF National Office: PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696. Phone: 630-990-0010. Fax: 630-990-0246.

Web address: www.compassionatefriends.org. Toll free national office: 877-969-0010



Alan Pedersen will be our guest speaker March 14, 2013!

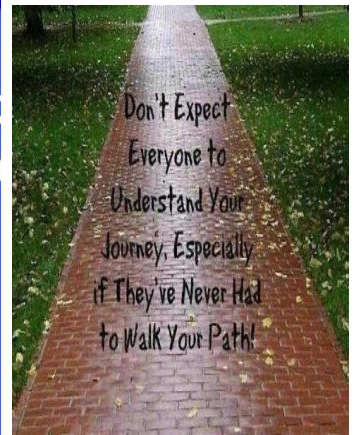
Angels Across The USA Tour
2012



Alan Pedersen is an inspirational speaker on grief and loss, award winning songwriter and successful recording artist. In August of 2001, Alan's only daughter died in a car accident. Since that tragic event Alan has turned his journey through the valley of grief and the pain of loss into a collection of powerful and moving songs recorded on to 4 highly acclaimed CD's. Alan speaks and plays his original music at more than 100 events every year throughout the United States. His gentle mix of humor and straight-from-the-heart talk wrapped around powerful songs about love, loss and healing make for a unique experience.

Date: **3/14/2013** Time: **7:00 P.M.**

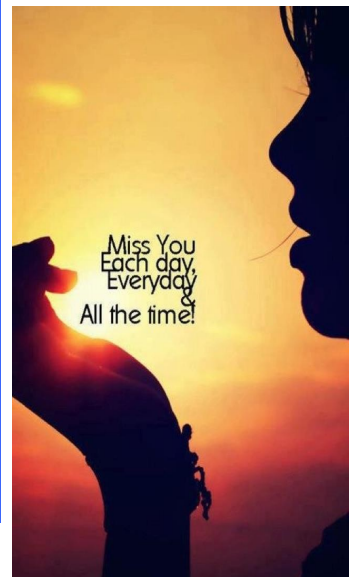
Location: **Southside Community Church**
2211 Jones Road, Paragould, AR.



The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas has a Facebook page!!
www.facebook.com/groups/tcfofnea

For more details
Contact
870-476-6025
tcfofnortheastarkansas@yahoo.com

For more information about the
Angels Across The USA
Tour 2012
visit us at
www.AngelsAcrossTheUSA.com



This program is not appropriate for children because of the subject matter



Alan's Bio

Alan Pedersen is an award winning songwriter and successful recording artist and performer playing more than 100 concerts each year across the United States. A former Nashville writer, Alan has turned the focus of his music and message toward helping the bereaved find hope and healing as they navigate the valley of grief. As a writer, Alan draws on his unique journey combining his own experience with the stories of thousands of bereaved families he has met and reached out to over the years. As a performer he draws on the experience gleaned from his work as a network radio reporter, stand-up comedian, and actor.

His own story was the catalyst for his shift in music and message. In 2001, Alan's only daughter Ashley was killed in an automobile accident in Colorado. This tragedy would take his life in a direction he never imagined and the pain and journey toward finding joy again have been the subject matter for three highly acclaimed CD's of original songs.

Alan's message is simple, **"we were put on this earth to love them for as long as we live, not for as long as they lived."** He believes that healing comes slow, but does come as we once again reach out to others who share this journey and offer our hand to help. His gentle mix of humor and straight from the heart talk wrapped around powerful songs about love, loss, and healing make for a unique concert experience.

Alan has performed or been a keynote speaker and workshop presenter at many international, national, and regional conferences including The World Gathering on Bereavement, The Compassionate Friends National Conference, and The National Gathering of Bereaved Parents of the USA. His music is popular with bereaved people around the world and is used at candle lighting services, balloon and butterfly releases, and by hundreds of professionals and organizations as a healing tool for the bereaved.

"An evening with Alan Pedersen is an experience like none other. He WILL make you laugh, he MAY make you cry, he will surely give you some things to think about, but most of all you will be gently guided to that most sacred and healing place of sweet remembrance."

Dr. Gloria Horsley, PHD, President of the Open to Hope Foundation, National Board Member of The Compassionate Friends, and co-host of Healing the Grieving Heart radio program on the Health and Wellness Network is a fan of Alan's music and message as well. Alan Has been a guest on her radio program on multiple occasions and has performed music as part of her workshops and for her local TCF Chapter. She offers these words:

"Alan Pedersen is a philosopher who sings. Few songwriters or singers have impacted the grief world with the magnitude Alan has. His music and words of wisdom say it all. He takes us on the journey from grief and loss to hope and recovery"

In 2010, Alan will do his biggest tour yet as he reaches out to organizations large and small who help bereaved families around the country. The Angels across the USA tour which is completely sponsored by bereaved families in honor of their children, grandchildren, and siblings will travel to 120+ cities and feature at least one concert event in 48 states. The goal of this 2010 tour is to raise community awareness and draw media attention toward these grief organizations that provide local resources for the bereaved.

Please visit www.angelsacrosstheUSA.com to learn more about Alan's 2010 Tour.

Our March meeting will be held in the church building to see and hear Alan Pederson. The address is: Southside Community Church, 2211 Jones Road, Paragould Arkansas at 7:00

This program is not appropriate for children because of the subject matter



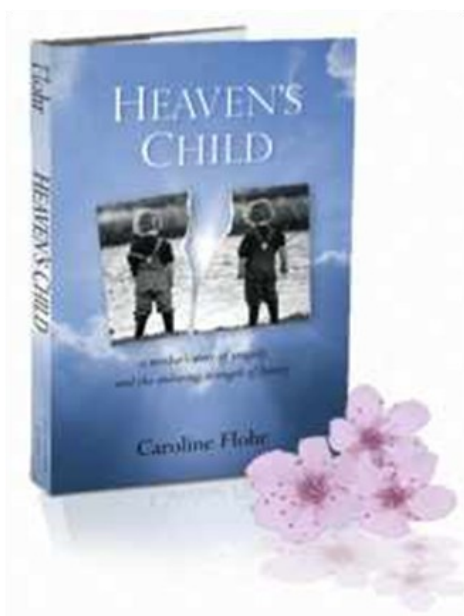
Moving Through The Grief Of Losing a Child

I was a woman like many others; focused on my five children and family, living a quiet life on Bainbridge Island in the state of Washington. And then, in August 2004, our lives changed. That night, eight teenagers piled into an SUV and took a midnight joyride. My 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah, was killed.

The thought of losing a child--if "losing" is the correct verb--had never crossed my mind. Tragedies, as such, were something that happened to someone else, something you read about in the paper or heard from a neighbor. Nothing could have prepared me for the deep pain...but nothing could have prepared me for the peace that now permeates my mind and heart. The shock sets in; everything moves in slow motion as if time comes to a halt, and time has halted. An acquaintance delivers a candle on day six with a card inscribed, "Place this candle in your kitchen. Each night while you prepare the family meal know that the shimmering of the candlelight reflects the child who now lives within you." A lovely thought.

Eight years later, I still light a candle on my kitchen windowsill. My child lives *within* me now. The days turn to weeks. Friends surround you, keeping you busy, your mind occupied. Absorb their kindness. Accept their help. Eliminate expectations. Learn to be gentle with yourself. Give yourself space. Make room for quiet. Always remember that grief is personal, as is death. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve. Seek out therapy. You may be ready. Share your story and connect with others. Surround yourself with those who will listen, not necessarily those who will offer advice. For it is when others listen that we can sort out our thoughts and settle our mind. Your inner strength seeks you out, sometimes sooner in the process, sometimes later.

That strength moves you forward--tiny steps in this process. Let the memories fill your mind. Let yourself laugh again. Smile. Sing out when a favorite song you shared plays on the radio. Let your heart awaken to the joys memories bring. Pay attention to the synchronicity and patterns in your life. Pay attention to your intuition. And pray. It doesn't matter what you believe. Just ask, notice, and respond. Faith, hope and love all intersect. Maybe things will begin to make a little sense, just maybe. Look to your children who live. Note their resilience and strength during this epic period of trauma. Let their sense of life and hope inspire you. When the pain returns, and it will, allow yourself to go to the depths of that pain. Cry. I promise, you will be okay when you resurface. And as you move towards years four and five, you will learn that yes, life has been a living nightmare, and it is okay to admit that. Realize that as the years pass, you will learn to weave your loss into your daily life. Accepting the loss of a loved one is to release, but not erase. To hold. But not to hold the pain. As year five turns towards eight, my hope is that you can slowly wrap yourself around the idea that you can celebrate life and celebrate death. Death and gratitude can go hand in hand. Just possibly, it is those who have passed before us who are our greatest teachers. Remember always that you never walk alone because the life of someone who passes lives on in the love you. Shared.



"Heavens Child" by Caroline Flohr will be available in the library of The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas.

Our library is located in the conference room of The Southside Community Church, where our meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 P.M.

www.HeavensChild.com

amazon.com/author/carolineflohr

carolineflohr@gmail.com





The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas

Healing Hearts Newsletter



National TCF Conference Boston July 5-7 Update; Keynote Speakers Named!

Reserve Your Conference Hotel Rooms Now!

You can now make reservations for the 36th TCF National Conference host hotel, the Boston Sheraton, 39 Dalton St., Boston MA 02199. Reservations can be made through the Online Reservation Form or by calling the hotel at 888-627-7054. Plan to attend this year and hear some great speakers and participate in other activities.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING REGISTRATION: We are now anticipating that online registration for the national conference will begin within 2-4 weeks from today, Tuesday, February 5, 2013. Watch here for details as they become available!

Conference Keynoters Named!

TCF is always known for having great keynoters and many have been waiting anxiously to find out who they will hear speak at the conference. We now have that information! They are:

- Dr. Heidi Horsley, Dr. Gloria Horsley, founders of "Open to Hope" Foundation and Phil Horsley (Chair of TCF Foundation's Board of Trustees,) a family united after the loss of sibling and son Scott, will combine to welcome you as Opening keynoters at the National Conference.
- Tina Chery who, after the murder of her son Louis, created the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute with a mission to create and support an environment where families can live in peace and unity.
- Ken Druck, bereaved parent, founder of the Jenna Druck Foundation, and one of the nation's pioneers in personal transformation including healing after loss.
- Bill Hancock, director of the Bowl Championship Series (college football), author of *Riding with the Blue Moth*, and father of Will, who was killed during the January 27, 2001 crash of an airplane carrying members of the Oklahoma State University men's basket team.

To learn more about TCF National Conferences in general, visit national.conferences.thecompassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends does not espouse any religious ideologies. Southside Community Church has graciously offered the use of it's conference room as a place to hold our meetings.

Thank You Southside Community Church !

In Loving Memory...

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. We have all paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved ones. Through "Love Gifts," parents and others who wish to, may provide financial help to support our chapter.

We appreciate these gifts and use them in our chapter's work to be there to help other people who have lost a precious child, or grandchild, brother or sister.

Telephone or email Friends

If you need someone to talk to.....

Toni Baker, 870-476-6025 or baker2205@msncom

Toni's son Jayson died in a motorcycle accident.

Linda Lenox 870-573-6920 or linda@thelenoxfamily.com

Linda's daughter Melissa died in a flooded creek.



To the Newly Bereaved

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better.

We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can truly be prepared.

When you're newly bereaved, suddenly you find yourself on an emotional roller-coaster where you have no idea what to expect next. Here are thoughts on some of what you may be experiencing or feeling (many of these will apply to bereaved siblings and grandparents):

• **Psychological**

- You're in shock from what has happened and a numbness surrounds you to help shield you from the pain.
- You find yourself in denial. Your child cannot be dead. You expect to see your child walk through the door any moment.
- You see your child in the faces of others walking down the street.
- You wonder how someone can feel this much pain and survive.
- Thoughts of suicide briefly enter your mind. You tell yourself you want to die—and yet you want to live to take care of your family and honor your child's memory.
- You want to know how the people around you can go about their day as if nothing has happened—don't they understand that your life—everything that meant anything to you—has just ended? Your purpose in life is gone.
- You are no longer afraid of death as each day that passes puts you one day closer to being with your child.
- Thoughts of "what ifs" enter your mind as you play out scenarios that you believe would have saved your child.
- Your memory has suddenly become clouded. You're shrouded in forgetfulness. You'll be driving down the road and not know where you are or remember where you're going. As you walk, you may find yourself involved in "little accidents" because you're in a haze.
- You fear that you are going crazy.
- You find there's a videotape that constantly plays in an endless loop in your mind, running through what happened.
- You find your belief system is shaken and you try to sort out what this means to your faith.
- Placing impossible deadlines on yourself, you go back to work, but find that your mind wanders and it's difficult to function efficiently or, some days, at all. Others wonder when you'll be over "it," not understanding that you'll never be the same person you were before your child died—and the passage of time will not make you so.
- You find yourself reading the same paragraph over and over again trying to understand what someone else has written.

• **Emotional**

- You rail against the injustice of not being allowed the choice to die instead of your child.
- You find yourself filled with anger, whether it be at your partner, a person you believe is responsible for your child's death, God, yourself, and even your child for dying.
- You yearn to have five minutes, an hour, a day back with your child so you can tell your child of your love or thoughts left unsaid.
- Guilt becomes a powerful companion as you blame yourself for the death of your child. Rationally you know that you were not to blame—you most certainly would have saved your child if you'd been given the chance.
- You feel great sadness and depression as you wrestle with the idea that everything important to you has been taken from you. Your future has been ruined and nothing can ever make it right.

Continued on page 7



• Physical

- Either you can't sleep at all or you sleep all the time. You feel physical exhaustion even when you have slept.
- You no longer care about your health and taking care of yourself—it just doesn't seem that important anymore.
- You're feeling anxiety and great discomfort—you're told they're panic attacks.
- The tears come when you least expect them.
- Your appetite is either gone or you find yourself overeating.

• Family and Social

- If you have surviving children, you find yourself suddenly overprotective, not wanting to allow them out of your sight. Yet you feel like a bad parent because it's so difficult to focus on their needs when you're hurting so bad yourself.
- You find that your remaining family at home grieves the loss differently and you search for a common ground which seems difficult to find.
- You've been told by well-meaning people, even professionals, that 70-80-90 percent of all couples divorce after their child dies. You are relieved to find that new studies show a much lower divorce rate, from 12-16%, believed to be caused by the "shared experience" aspect of the situation.
- Old friends seem to fade away as you learn they cannot comprehend the extent or length of your grief.
- Things you liked to do which seemed so important before now seem meaningless.
- Others say you'll someday find "closure," not understanding that closure never applies when it is the death of your child.
- Fleeting thoughts of pleasurable activities bring about feelings of guilt. If you child can't have fun, how can you do anything that brings you enjoyment?

Finding the "New Me"

When you're newly bereaved, you don't see how you can put one foot in front of the other, much less survive this loss. You'll never "recover" from your loss nor will you ever find that elusive "closure" they talk of on TV—but eventually you will find the "new me." You will never be the same person you were before your child died. It may be hard to believe now, but in time and with the hard work of grieving (and there's no way around it,) you will one day think about the good memories of when your child lived rather than the bad memories of how your child died. You will even smile and, yes, laugh again someday—as hard to believe as that may seem. When the newly bereaved come to a meeting of The Compassionate Friends, they will be able to listen and learn from others who are further down the grief road than you. They will have made it through that first birthday, first death anniversary, first holiday, and so many other firsts that you have not yet reached. You will learn coping skills from other bereaved parents who, like you, never thought they'd survive. There are no strangers at TCF meetings—only friends you have not yet met.

Even though you are newly bereaved and the road is long, we invite you to walk with us for as long as the journey takes, as long as you need us.



Beaded Bracelet

Key ring



Bella Kay Creations

Phone: 816-649-4149



Bronze Photo Bracelet

Photo Bracelet



www.bellakaycreations.com/home/html

bellakaycreations@gmail.com



A Note From Toni Baker, Chapter Leader

TCF of Northeast Arkansas is growing and we are thankful to all those who support us. No one wishes to be part of this group but sometimes we have no choice. I hope, if you have never lost a child, that you never do. This is a long hard journey to travel alone and we are here to travel with you. We come together out of friendship to encourage and share with others who endure our pain, and give hope to one another. If you are traveling this grief journey, we welcome you to come join us on the second Thursday of the month at 7pm at Southside Community Church CONFERENCE Room, (up the hill from the church,) 2211 Jones Road, Paragould. It's always hard to take that first step and go to a meeting--but remember we are here to walk with you.

YOU NEED NOT WALK ALONE.

We will have an inspirational speaker who is a singer/songwriter, please join us on Thursday, March 14th. This is open to the public so please come hear Alan Pederson sing and speak. Alan lost his daughter in a car accident when she was 16 and is dealing through his grief through his music. Check him out on You Tube.

Hugs to All, Toni

Thank you!! There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. As parents find hope and healing by attending meetings or reading out newsletter, they often make a monetary "love gift" to our chapter. The day of the death of the child is often remembered in this way. Others in the community make contributions because they want to help us with the newsletter, meeting cost, or maintaining a good library.

Some give in memory of someone.

This Month We Thank:

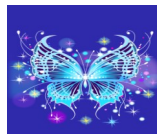
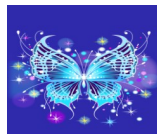
Shauna Boggs - In memory of Dillon Brown

The Compassionate Friends
Regional Coordinators for the state of Arkansas

David and Dana Penn

870-759-1299

www.djdp32@hotmail.com



WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

-Abraham Lincoln-

**In this sad world of ours,
sorrow comes to all
It comes with bitterest agony....
Perfect relief is not possible,
except with time.
You cannot now realize that
you will ever feel better...
And yet this is a mistake.
You are sure to be happy again,
To know this, which is certainly
true,
will make you some less miserable
now.
I have experienced enough to know
what I say.
(Abraham Lincoln lost three sons:
Edward 4, William 11 & Thomas 18)**



Our Children Remembered

Melissa Wilkinson

Jayson Baker

Cooper Catharine Porter

Nathan Kidd

Haylee Kidd

Timothy Lee Fitzwater

Shane Mathew Fitzwater

Aaron Scott Boyer

Jennifer Cook

Samantha Cook

Tyler James Tritch

Nicholas Zurosky

Ashlyn Dunn

Carter Smith

Jayden Wilkinson

Shane Palmer

Terry Brown

Stephanie Sluder

Caiden Billups

Timothy House

Contact me if you'd like your children added

Linda Lenox: linda@thelenoxfamily.com

In Loving Memory...

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We appreciate these gifts and use them in our chapter's work to be there to help other people who have lost a precious a child, or grandchild, or brother or sister.

The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas

We ask for donations in memory of our children who have died. Our activities support the grief work of many families. Our work also goes to educate the community about the grief process and how everyone can help and give emotional support to bereaved families.

Please help us help others by making a "love gift"

Tax deductible love gifts may be sent to:

TCF of Northeast Arkansas, c/o Dawn Kidd, treasurer

2703 Stonegate Drive, Paragould, AR 72450

Fold In
↓

Fold In
↓

This page can be printed to form an envelope for your love gift. Fold as directed,
insert your check. and tape the ends closed

I would like to give a love gift of \$ _____ in memory of _____

If you choose to give a love gift, please add your return address to receive your tax deduction receipt

May we acknowledge your love gift in our newsletter: Please Circle YES NO

If you would like your loved one's name added to our memorial page,

"Our Children Remembered" in our newsletter, Please submit the following information:

Child's full name _____

Birth date month and year _____ Death date, month and year _____

CENTER

CENTER

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The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas

Toni Baker

2703 Stonegate Drive

Paragould, Arkansas 72450