



The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Healing Hearts Newsletter

2211 Jones Road, Paragould, AR.

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

Email: tcfofnortheastarkansas@yahoo.com Webpage: tcfofnortheastarkansas.weebly.com

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tcfofnea/>

Our next meeting is November 13th, 2014 at 7:00 P.M. — 9:00 P.M.

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As the holiday season draws near, many people smile with anticipation; Thanksgiving dinners are planned, trips to be with family or friends are made ready, and shopping for those special Christmas gifts that will make a loved ones eyes light up is beginning. But not for everyone; not for us who are broken because of the death of our child, or children, our grandchild, brother or sister.

People who haven't suffered life's worst individual tragedy don't understand what we're going through; why we'd rather be alone than to pretend everything is the same, that these "special" days still come, no matter what's happened.

For many of us, our lost loved one hadn't yet been born, or was born and died soon afterward. Or parents who lost a child who was grown, or middle aged. It doesn't matter at what age our child died, or for what reason. Our hearts are broken.

if you prefer to skip cooking a family dinner, it might be easier to eat out than to face that empty chair. If you have other children for which you feel you must make the holiday, change it. Start different traditions. If family members don't understand, we can only hope that they never do.

[This poem was written by Jennifer Matthews Malloch for her daughter, Kimberly](#) →

Someone is Missing...

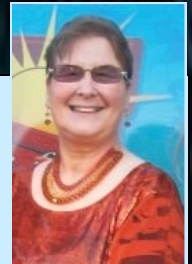
Every day since I lost my child, I wake up with the knowledge.... someone is missing
I go through my day and in the back of my mind I hear a whisper.... someone is missing
I sit down to dinner with my family, and in the back of my mind I hear a whisper....someone is missing
I wake up and think....there should be a birthday to celebrate today and I hear clearly.... Someone Is Missing
I wake up and think....this is the day my whole world changed and I hear clearly....Someone Is Missing
I wake up and a holiday season is here and I hear loudly....
Someone Is Missing.
I try to get into the holiday spirit and I hear a whispersomeone is missing
I gather with family to celebrate the holiday season and I look around the room and inside my head I hear screaming....
SOMEONE IS MISSING!!
Please understand I enjoy spending time with family but this voice that I hear squeezes my heart....I love each and every one of you but please understand.....
Someone Is Missing!!

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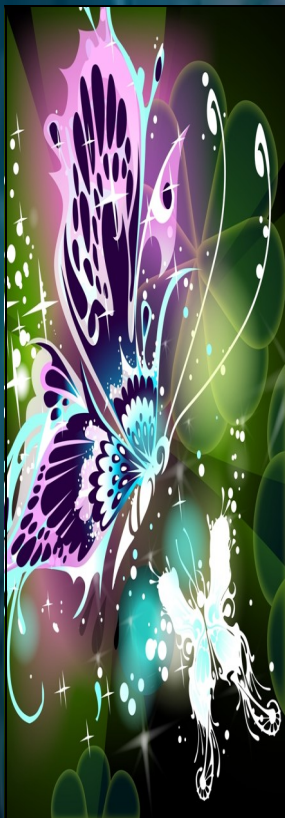
Note from our Chapter Leader, Toni Baker



Weather is changing and so many emotions at this time of year keep creeping up. This month at our meeting we will be talking about "How to Handle the Holidays". Some of you this may be experiencing your first holiday season and we want to try and help. It's hard to attend your first few meetings -- we understand that and you don't have to speak if you don't want to. We are here to encourage you, listen give hope and love and help to reach a new normal.

Worldwide Candle Light Service is Sunday, December 14th at 6:30pm at Southside Community Church Conference Room (up the hill from the church), 2211 Jones Rd, Paragould. You and your families are encouraged to attend. Please bring a picture of your loved one to display on our Memory Table. If you would like your loved one included on a video to be shown that evening please send a picture, full name and dates, parents/family names ASAP. tcfofnortheastarkansas@yahoo.com There will NOT be a meeting in December.

Love and Hugs, Toni



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all children who have died

Worldwide Candle Lighting®

... that their light may always shine.

Sunday, December 14, 2014
7 PM Around the Globe



"There are no goodbyes for us. Wherever you are, you will always be in my heart." ~ Gandhi



We'd love to have your feedback!

Join Us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tcfofnea/>

Join Us on the Web!

tcfofnortheastarkansas.weebly.com

Our next 3 Meetings!

November 13, 2014

World Wide Candle lighting
December 14, 2014

January 9, 2015

Mark Your Calendars!



The Compassionate Friends does not espouse any religious ideologies. Southside Community Church has graciously offered the use of its conference room as a meeting place for our chapter.

Thank You
Southside Community Church!

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter with an original poem or story you wrote, or if you wish to stop receiving this newsletter, please contact me at:
linda@thelenoxfamily.com



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Upcoming Events:

November →

For our regular meeting on November 13, we will be talking about how to deal with the holidays.

We will have a planning meeting for our Candle Lighting on November 6, 2014 at 2:00 P.M. at Swirlz.

We will need all the help we can get for this event. Please consider being there to help plan and volunteer to help us make this beautiful event, as a tribute to our children, one to remember.

December →

On December 14th, we will sponsor The Compassionate Friends World Wide Candle Lighting. During this beautiful event, candles will be lit at 7:00 P.M. in each time zone around the world. This means that candles will be burning somewhere for 24 hours, straight. This is a very touching tribute to all of the children, of any age, and for any reason, who have died too soon.

The Candle Lighting will include music, reading of poems, and reading of the names of the children who are included on our scroll. We will light 5 candles on stage, and every person present will have their own candle to light and hold for their own child, grandchild, or sibling. The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas will furnish the candles; we have all already paid the ultimate price.

Please plan to be with us at the conference room of the Southside Community Church, which is up the hill from the church. Parking is limited at the conference room, however there is ample parking at the church, and a sidewalk up to the conference room, where we have our regular meetings. We ask that everyone be there between 6:00-6:30, so there will be time to sign in with your loved ones name to be read from the scroll, and to sign up for the door prize. Candles must be lit promptly at 7:00.

You are encouraged to bring a picture of your loved ones to be placed on our memory table, to be displayed, near the stage, if you wish.

Refreshments will be available after the event, and names will be drawn for door prizes.

Because of the nature of this event, we ask that children not be included.

The Candle Lighting last year had to be canceled because of dangerous Icy road conditions. If that is the case this year, we will try to contact everyone by email, facebook and on our webpage.

January →

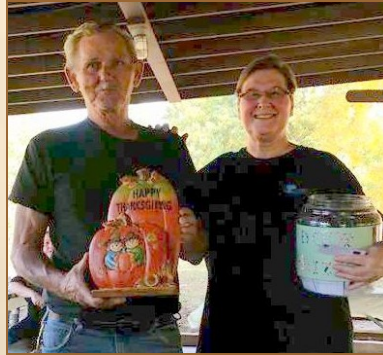
Our regular meeting in January will be on the 8th. It is our wish that everyone have a safe holiday season. Be good to yourselves.



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The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas 2nd Annual “Walk To Remember” and Family Picnic

On Saturday, October 25th, our chapter sponsored our 2nd annual “Walk to Remember,” and family picnic. The weather was beautiful, the food was good, and the turn-out was wonderful!





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Finding the Magic

Written by Sandy Goodman

Once again, it's that time of year. Will this year be different from the last seven? Will I find the magic again? Wait. Let me revise that question: Did I ever feel the magic? As a bereaved parent, I have experienced only two holiday seasons. While I have physically lived through 49 hell-idays, emotionally, there have been only two types: the ones before and the ones after Jason's death. The two categories are distinctly different. If memory serves me correctly, which it doesn't always do, I spent the first 42 years focused on material issues. First as a child...What would I get?...What did I want?...What would make me the happiest child in the whole wide world? As I grew older and had my own little family, I spent the next 22 years asking myself what I would get them. What did they want? What would make them love me more? How would I manage to pay for all of it? I always felt there was something missing...but I didn't really have the time or interest to find that missing something. Besides, why borrow trouble? Each year, by the time I realized that something was missing, the decorations were packed in their boxes and the kids had gone back to school. I could always find the magic next year.

In 1996, Jason died. Suddenly, my life ended its forward march, and everything I had ever regarded as important became nonsense. My heart was not simply broken-it was ripped into shreds, emptied of what had fueled it over the span of my life. I had no hope of waiting for it to heal and had to face the reality that only a total reconstruction would suffice. I would have to create a new heart...from scratch. The first fall was difficult. I was still numb, still cushioned from reality, but the pain of Jason's death was beginning to seep in. Then it was Halloween, and the horror of what had happened was upon me. Thanksgiving came with Christmas on its tail, bringing an empty chair, an unbroken wishbone, and silence where laughter had once prevailed. I was sure it could not get any worse, but life always surprises us. The holidays of 1997 and 1998 were devastating. The numbness that had protected me that first season was gone. Reality had arrived, and I could not escape it. I would never again see Jason walk through our front door with that grin that always made me nervous, tracking snow across my "freshly waxed for the holidays" floor. I was sure I would never again buy two of everything for Jason and his twin brother. I would never again enjoy the holidays...or life. Years four through seven, we bought gifts for needy families, hung Jason's stocking right beside the rest of ours, illuminated special candles to include him in our celebrations, and smiled cheerfully at everyone who offered us their joy-filled "Merry Christmas." And as I spread my Christmas cheer and goodwill toward men, I had only one thought in my mind. It became my mantra: *If I can just make it through December, I will be okay.* I was no longer focused on the material side of the season. I was no longer focused on the season at all. I wanted it over.

And now, here I am, at year eight. My eighth season of joy, my eighth year of decking the halls, my eighth year of Jason's physical absence. You probably think I am going to tell you that this year will be no different from the last seven. You might even anticipate that I am going to tell you that it never gets better, that there is no such thing as healing, and that grieving parents will always be bitter and angry, especially during the times when families everywhere celebrate the season of giving. Wrong. But don't feel bad; this revelation has totally shocked me also. A few days ago, I woke up and was amazed to see that it was snowing. Overnight, the world had gone from brown to pure glistening white. It was beautiful. Later that day, I heard someone in my home actually humming Christmas carols. How dare they! But...I was alone. It was me. That evening, I spent an hour printing up a beautiful green and red Christmas "wish list" with graphics! That was the straw that broke the camel's back. Suddenly, it hit me. And no matter how guilty I feel in acknowledging it, I have to tell you: I am looking forward to the holidays.

(Continued on page 6)

Telephone or email Friends

Toni Baker, 870-476-6025 or baker2205@msn.com
Toni's son Jayson died in a motorcycle accident.

Linda Lenox, 870-573-6920 orlinda@thelenoxfamily.com
Linda's daughter Melissa died in a flooded creek.

Jo Cook, 870-249-1290
Jo's daughter, Jennifer died in an accident with a train.

Advisory Board Members

Associate Pastor Pat Graham, LMSW

Crystal Baldwin, MSNFNP-BC

Mariah Bryson, General manager of Zaxby's

Rick Nunn, Owner of Swirlz



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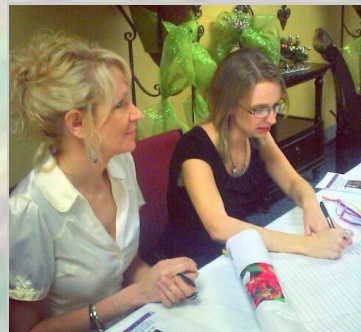
(Continued from page 5)

How can this be? Why is this happening? Well, after much pondering, I think I know why. I think I spent 42 holidays looking through a lens that focused only on black and white, on the physical, on that which can be seen and physically felt. The lavishly wrapped gifts, excessive food, amount of money spent, and glittering (sometimes gaudy) lights on the tree. The next seven were spent looking through a lens that was distorted and scarred by grief. I focused on what was missing rather than on what was still here. I think I wanted it that way. But now, I feel I've learned how not only to endure—but to enjoy—a memory that can be defined only as bittersweet. I've come to appreciate that feeling emotional is really about feeling impassioned. And I think this year, as the songs start to play on the radio and the cards begin filling our mailbox, I will choose a different lens, a lens that captures what we cannot see or physically touch. A lens that goes beyond. Not everything will change. I will still hang Jason's stocking beside ours, buy gifts for the needy, light candles in his memory, and all of the other things that have made the last seven years bearable. But this year, I hope to do these things with joy rather than with bitterness and sorrow. This year, I want to grasp the hand of a homeless mother, kiss the cheek of a newborn baby, and hold a sleeping kitten while it plays in its dreams. I want to watch Santa as he holds wiggly toddlers on his lap. I want to sing "Silent Night" on a snowy night in mid-December when it feels as if all the world is sleeping. I want to feel the Christmas that we cannot see. This year, I want to remember who I really am. I want to enjoy the months ahead. Not because I need to or because someone says it's time to—but because—well, because I can. This year, I want to find the magic before it is time to put away the boxes. And I won't stop searching until I find it. Merry Christmas to you and yours. Believe in magic And always... expect miracles.

Sandy Goodman, In Memory of Jason

Sandy Goodman is the author of Love Never Dies: A Mother's Journey from Loss to Love (Jodere, 2002). You can learn more about Sandy, her journey, and her book by visiting her Web site at <http://www.loveneverdies.net>

Pictures from our 2012 Candle Lighting



Our Children Remembered

Melissa Noel Wilkinson

Jayson Baker

Cooper Catharine Porter

Nathan Kidd

Haylee Kidd

Nicholas Zurosky

Jennifer Cook

Timothy Lee Fitzwater

Samantha Cook

Shane Mathew Fitzwater

Jennifer Lee Hancock

Aaron Scott Boyer

Ashlyn Dunn

Aidyn Isaiah Queen

Annaya Marie Edwards

Shane Palmer

Tabitha Marsh

Steven Charles Garland

Stephanie Sluder

Timothy House

Julie Ellen Amick

Carter Smith

Olivia Jurkin

Tyler James Tritch

Mattie Bryant

Terry Brown

Shayla Jo Miller

Jayden Wilkinson

Jasmine Sierra Miller

Caiden Billups

Blake Howerton

Andrew Wayne Myers

Jon David Penn

Joseph "Chase" Jackson

Tyler James Troutt

Matthew Russo

Brent Hawkins

Nathan Swafford

Daryl McWilliams

Billy Ray

Noah Spencer Boyd

James Clapp

Robert (Bobby) Gray

*If you would like your child added
to this list, contact me:
linda@thelenoxfamily.com*



**The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas
2703 Stonegate Drive
Paragould, AR 72450**

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no longer wish to receive this newsletter.
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Address Label

IF YOU ARE MOVING, Please send us your change of address.

Expenses of our newsletter and meetings are covered by monetary donations given by those who want to help in our outreach. It may be given in memory of your child, a loved one or a friend. Contributions are tax-deductible. Make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends of NEA
Send to: TCF of NEA, 2703 Stonegate Drive, Paragould, AR 72450

\$_____ For: _____ Newsletter Expense _____ Meeting Expense _____ Where Needed

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We truly appreciate your love gifs.

The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Arkansas is a support group for those who have experienced the death of a child, grandchild, brother or sister. Parents whose sorrow has softened and who have found fresh hope and strength for living offer friendship, understanding and hope to others through monthly meetings, "telephone friends," a library table, and a newsletter. Attending your first meeting does take courage, but our parents who do attend find a comforting network of support and friendship that only friends ho have "been there" can give. **COME JOIN US!!**