

Dear Family Members,

It's that time of the year. For some of us it's the "first" and for others it's "again". Everywhere we look we're inundated with the Holiday movies and ads showing everyone being happy in their perfect world. In one cat food commercial, with Christmas music playing in the background, I'm sure I saw a cat wearing a Santa hat happily running to the owner when the cat was called. Okay, anyone who knows anything about cats already figured out that I made that up because cats don't come when called **or** wear hats but it could be next. Maybe it's just me but it **seems** that these things start popping up earlier each and every year. I was in one large Superstore, 2 weeks before Halloween, and the Christmas decoration items were on the top shelf patiently waiting to be moved into our eye level "buy me now" position. Everywhere we turn we're relentlessly poked or even stabbed in the heart.

Over the 13 years since Ashley's death I've become pretty much immune to what was once a very hard thing to view. I never thought I would be able to see "complete" families at the Thanksgiving table or having hot chocolate around the perfect fireplace or decorating the perfect tree. Or, the people who are total opposites meeting, not getting along with each other but overcoming everything to have the perfect "Happy Ending". If you haven't picked up on this theme I now confess, "Yes, I watch the Hallmark Channel". By the way I've never seen a "Part 2" to those movies where the "Happy Ending" family has to deal with real family problems. But, there was a time when I couldn't watch or see these things. It was just too hard and a painful reminder of how "un-perfect" my life was and how so much was out of my control. **All** the things about the Holidays were an ever-present reminder of my daughter's death. Thanksgiving to Christmas was Ashley's most favorite time of the year. Losing her turned the once joy-filled season into being pain-filled and empty. No one outside of my TCF family truly "got it" or me.

Somewhere along the journey things changed. I can't really put my finger on which *year* it happened but I know it was a gradual transformation. For the change to occur I had to be willing to accept the "New Normal". I didn't like it but I came to terms with the, "it is what it is". Some traditions 12 year old Ashley and I did, I continued to do. Some things I had to change or even stop. I've shared before that it took me nine years to have a Christmas tree. I wanted to get one sooner but I just couldn't. I was aware of my limitations. I knew that I wouldn't be able to take Ashley's favorite decorations down and put them, along with the ones she made back in elementary school with her picture on them, back in the attic. For a while I took those "special" ornaments to a friend's house and put them on their tree. They boxed them up so I didn't have to take them down and close the lid. I'm so grateful to have those pictures and ornaments. I know some of our family members don't have any. Along the way the Hallmark Channel movies didn't hurt and I was even able to appreciate them. Please don't miss understand. I still and will **always** miss Ashley and wish that we were watching the Hallmark movies together. I had to use the phrase "pretty much immune" because the movie, "A Christmas Visitor" is a must see for me and it does bring a few tears. It's the one movie that gives a glimpse into our world. It offers that there **is** healing and hope in **our** time **if** we work at it and **if** we receive it. This is indeed a healing journey we're on and we need not walk it alone.

Sunday, December 14 at 7:00PM our World Wide Candlelight Memorial will be held at Brown's Woodbrook Memorial Church in Towson. Last year our Memorial fell victim to the weather so I hope to see everyone who said they were going to attend and participate do so this year. Don't forget to come early and make a butterfly for our perpetual Butterfly Garden. Our memorial is growing each year with presentations and participation. If you want your loved one included in the program, please send an email to Candlelight@Baltimoretcf.com. Also include if you wish to do one presentation such as a song (CD or live), poem or story to honor the memory of your loved one. Please include the title and artist of your presentation. Also, in the case of a song, email a copy of the song along with your loved ones name **and** bring one with you to the Memorial "just in case". Even if you submitted your loved one's name in previous years we still need to hear from you **each** year. Please send your submissions by Monday, December 8. After that, we can't guarantee your loved one's name will appear in the program but we'll try. Remember to bring a picture for our Memory Table. The reception will be in the Parlor immediately following the Memorial. Please feel free to bring "sweets", a dessert and/or a donation. We make a yearly contribution to the church for opening their doors to us and giving us more space to conduct all of our sharing circles. Also, we need and appreciate assistance with the set up **and** clean up. I look forward to seeing you at our Candlelight Memorial on December 14.

May you find peace on your journey and hope to hold on to.

Garrett Tollenger-Chapter Leader



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

P.O. BOX 2103

Ellicott City, MD 21041-2103
(410)560-3358:
www.BaltimoreTCF.com

September/October 2014 Newsletter

Dear Compassionate friends:

It is with cautious excitement that Irene and I have accepted the challenge of helping our dear Chapter Leader, Garrett Tollenger, with the production of the Newsletter. It is our first commitment to you, our compassionate friends, that you will receive newsletters frequently and with the information that has helped us in our journey through the grief of having lost our beloved only son, Joey Belcher.

This journey goes through many stages and it has been only with the wisdom and loving concern of parents who've been traveling along this path longer than we have, that we have been able to move on -- painfully and slowly -- in spite of the immense void in our hearts.

Joe and Irene Belcher, loving parents of **Joey Belcher**.

Date of birth: April 21, 1975 – Heaven date December, 17, 2012.

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Monthly Meeting Information

Baltimore County - The First Wednesday of the month at:
Brown Woodbrook Memorial Presbyterian Church
6200 N. Charles St. Baltimore

7:30-9:30 PM

TCF Chapter Contact Information

Chapter Leader: Garrett Tollenger,
410-879-5422,
info@baltimoretcf.com
gtollenger@verizon.net

Newsletter editors: Joe and Irene Belcher,
newsletter@baltimoretcf.com

The Sibling Corner

Our Towson chapter meeting hosts a sibling group, which coincides with our regular meeting time. There are so many special issues that occur when you lose a brother or sister. This group will offer a safe place for you to share your challenges, concerns and successes when walking this path. Siblings age 16 and over are welcome and encouraged to attend. This will be facilitated by [siblings for siblings](#).

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To Our New Members:

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We do understand.

To Our Seasoned Members:

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick.

TCF is here to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you.

Mark Your Calendars!

It's time to mark your calendars now for the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting which will be held at Brown Memorial Church beginning

promptly at 7:00 p.m. on **Sunday, December 14.**



If you have not attended before, this is a very moving and uplifting experience. During the service a family member will read the name of their loved one. During the reading of name(s), each family will light a candle for their child(ren).

Families are invited to read a story, a poem, sing a song or play music in honor of their child. Families are also invited to create a decorative butterfly with their child's name on it. Bring your special butterfly or create one at the Memorial to be included in Madeline's Butterfly Garden. This precious garden was inspired by the true story found on our Website and is dedicated to Abigail and Madeline. We invite you to bring pictures for our Memory Table. Also, please join us in the Parlor after the Candle lighting for our reception.

Food and light fare will be provided; but if you feel so inclined, we would welcome any baked pastries/cookies/pies, etc. for the tables. If you would like to include your child's name in the program or request to speak, read a poem, play a song, etc., please email with "Candlelight" in the subject line to:

Candlelight@BaltimoreTCF.com

by **December 8, 2014**

Reflections

Linda and I have had the wonderful opportunity to spend a couple weeks at our cabin in West Virginia during late September and early October of this year. As many of you know we built the cabin about a year following the death of our Son Jeff. He was a single man and his Mom and I were the recipients of his life insurance and retirement funds. For many

years we had a camper on the property and Jeff so loved going there and spending time enjoying the outdoors. He loved to cook over the open fire outside, so we took his funds and built a cabin in his memory that can be used for years to come by his two brothers and their family. The cabin sets on two acres of wooded land that was a part of Linda's home place. One of the summers that Jeff was there he built a fireplace outside out of rocks he gathered up from around the property, and that's where he would cook breakfast from. When we built the cabin the fireplace had to be moved. I was able to relocate it and use all the original stones Jeff had gathered, but no one cooks breakfast over the fire any longer. We do enjoy building a fire and setting around it in the evenings and enjoying hot dogs, pies done in pie irons and good family conversation. While there this time I hung a storage pouch of Jeff's that I keep not knowing really what I was going to do with it and now it has found a new home in my shed. There are so many memories of Jeff there and we enjoy every one of them while we are there. His picture hangs on the wall in the great room of the cabin, his gun and holster hangs on the wall and several boxes and mementos set on the floor under his picture. It is only a short ride from the cabin to the cemetery where he was laid to rest and when we go there it seems so unreal to see his name engraved on that tombstone. It gives us time to reflect and remember what a wonderful Son he was!

Howard and Linda Wade
loving parents of
Jeffery Van Wade

Date of birth: **November 17, 1964**
Heaven date: **October 12, 2005**



I AM

by Dave Tomaszewski
1974-2001

Borne of the air and sea
Tell me what to be
Or I will fly.
I am the seasons
For unknown reasons
And I do fly.
I am the stars
Jupiter and Mars
And still I fly.
I am the wind
Everywhere I've been
I'll always fly.

My thoughts: We fortunately found Dave's poetry journals in the trunk of his car...hidden away. This poem pulls at my heartstrings, and we put the first and last lines on his headstone.

Dave was born in Hawaii and loved the beach and outdoors...the air and sea. He had troubled teenage years, when this poem was written, and struggled to find his way in life. Now I feel him around me every season, shining through the stars, and with the gentle breeze or strong wind. And so he'll always fly, and I know he is always with me.

Carol Tomaszewski

A Parent's Grief

By: Joanne Eisenstadt

Jan. 29, 2013

Swept away in a process,
facing things that should not be.
We take unsteady steps,
into an altered world.

Suddenly, the days have no rhythm;
they begin and end.
There is no forward motion,
only the weight of the still air.

When we were with them,
never was a moment accidental.
They all had their place
and that was living.

If only you could know,
how to adjust your head,
to ease into healing,
but your journey is unpredictable.

Carry your heart;
hold it close.
Guard your goodness,
from the thievery of loss.

Forced to face your realness,
inspiration can be a gift
and when the sun rays touch your face,
you'll almost feel whole.

FIRE OF FREEDOM

By: Alan Scott Greenbaum

There's a fire burning out on the street
And it's burning out of control
It's a fire that never grows dim
A fire that never grows cold,
It's a fire that burns in the heart
A fire that burns in the soul
A fire that starts with a spark
And only continues to grow.

It's a fire, a fire called freedom
The freedom that every man seeks
The freedom to do as one pleases
The freedom to write and to speak,
It's the freedom some take for granted
The freedom some never know
The freedom that feeds the fire
And helps the fire to grow...

Yes, there's a fire sweeping the streets
And it's growing ever so strong
It's sweeping all over the world
It's sweeping everybody along,
Yes, the fire is burning so bright
It's a fire no one can disclaim
A fire that lights up the night
And freedom is its only name.

Yes, there's a fire burning out on the street
And it's too late to ever turn back
A fire that runs so deep
A fire that burns up the track,
It's a fire that cannot be crushed
A fire that will never die
A fire that cannot be hushed
And freedom is its only cry...

Alan Greenbaum: April 20, 2060



May 25, 2009

Forever loved and missed. Mom and Ilene.

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**Letter to us from Joey's best friend/brother,
Josh Schwartz, on turning a tragedy into
hope.**

Dear Irene and Papa Joe:
I am very happy that you have continued to attend
Compassionate Friends meetings. There are so
many other families who are going to need your
strength, love and support to help cope with their
own similar tragedies. God wants you both to be
strong, and somehow convert this tragedy into His

work for others. Supporting others through similar
situations is the best way to discover your strength,
and to experience true healing of the soul. That is
what Joey would want for you both.
Converting tragedy into hope and inspiration for
others, although easier said than done, will
ultimately be your fast track to healing, finding
purpose and faith in the most hopeless of
circumstances.

Joe and Irene Belcher in honor of **Joey Belcher**, our
beloved only son.

Joey Belcher, Jr. 1975-2012

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INTENTIONS

I intend to find peace and become whole again.

I intend to live life fully and in honor of all that
she was unable to do.

I intend to cry less.

I intend to laugh and forgive more.

I intend to embrace all that is still good in my
life and recognize all the blessings that I have.

I intend to make something of this terrible pain.

Jane Schindler
In Memory of
Emily Ann Schindler
Date of birth: July 27, 1985
Heaven date: January 27, 2004





The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old.

Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone.

We are The Compassionate Friends

Siblings Walking Together (formerly The Sibling Credo)

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.

Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the

individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us. When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

IN REMEMBRANCE

September Birthdays

Anna Elizabeth Rombach

Kelly Bateman

Gregory

David Leavitt

Richard J. Curran

Michael Francis Gist

Brian McBride Morris

Beth Szczepanski

Robert William Biondo

Nathan Krasnopoler

Bryan Canter

Nelson Yargar, III

Matthew David Puccini

Melisa Rene Lisa Shamer

Nickolas Benjamin Phippen

Kayla Anna Boone
Jordon Proulx
Camryn Grace Wilson
Jeffrey Alston
Christine Kelly Enders
Nathan Patrick Fenchak
Joshua Matthew Belanger
Chad Petterson
Elijah Joseph Virago
Joseph Michael Ackermann

September Heaven Days

Anna Elizabeth Rombach
Andrew Thomas Russell
Patrick Kenny Dieringer
Kent Ferree
Jocelyn Chilvers
William Patrick Ford III
Tom Sawyer
Conor James OSullivan
Hannah Renken
Kyle Richard Canter
Shanae Nicole Griffin
Lydia Shirazi
Parker Michael Willoughby
Morgan Smith
Tracy Lee Freeman
Julio Salgado
Lauryn Marie Little
Robert M. Bryant
Robin Tonette Thomas
Andrew Dewey McQuade
Jeremiah DeMario
Sunshine Marie Royston
Matthew David Puccini
Chip Carroll Wyrde
Karie Rebecca Dietz
Larry Schultz, III
Kareem Kelly Guest
Michael Ryan Atkins
Irene Matthews
Camryn Grace Wilson
Christopher Black
Danny Lee Gruz
Robert Palese
Jasmine Daye Bishai

October Birthdays

Bobby Bateman, Jr.
Daniel William Beckenholdt
Luke D'Antoni
Mark D. Sokolik
Elizabeth Conway Nass
Kyle Richard Canter
John Ohmann, III
Eric Montgomery
Michael Vincent Manieri
Hillary Fitzgerald
Jewel Donte Thomas
Brandon Rix
Michael Verleysen
Andrew Dewey McQuade
Jeremiah DeMario
Jessie Koch
Garrett Nelson
Connor Elliott King
Benjamin Thomas Huxtable
Amy Marie Adams
Bruce Francis Vasil
David Knox
Gaebrriel Patrick Kelly
Evan J. Weichert
Isaiah Eli Scott
Elise Nora Detterline
Christopher Ryan LePore
David Culbertson
Cathi Faye Horst
Jason D. Verfaillie
Andrew Wohlfort

October Heaven Days

Brian P. Hause
Thelma Louise Johnson
Joseph Polovoy
Sarah Jayne Orton
Zachary Michael Larson
Luke D'Antoni
Louis Ashok Lowenthal
Frank Woodrow Hughes, Jr.
Sherry Latrece Montgomery
Brittany Leigh Ey
Alexander Gregory Fee

Travis Anthony Jenkins
Ernest Bo Neeko Gales, III
Brandon Rix
Brearah Karli Stevens
Kevin Michael Ryan
Jessie Koch
Vicki Gail Sears-Hube
Stacey Lurn Gregg
Jenne Elynn Gans
Elisa Michelle Guibas
David Knox
Isaiah Eli Scott
Elise Nora Detterline
Christine Kelly Enders
Andrew Wohlfort
Jeffery Van Wade
Joseph Allan Caskey, Jr.
Trenton B. Reightler
Joseph Michael Ackermann

"Nobody Knows it But Me"

There's a place you travel when you need to
roam, and nobody knows it but me.

The roads don't go there, and the signs stay
home, and nobody knows it but me.

It's far, far away, and way, way afar, it's over
the moon and the sea.

And, Karin, wherever you're going, that's
wherever you are, and right beside you is
me.

All my love, heart and soul. Mom



"Nobody Knows it But Me"

Original words by Patrick O'Leary,
excerpted from his poem, Nobody.
Some words have been tweaked to become
my mantra for my dear Karin.

Jan Masal in Loving Memory of
Karin S. Masal-Hurley
Date of birth: April 15, 1970
Heaven date: December 13, 2013

Greater Baltimore TCF Family Gifts of Love and Support

JUDY E. HARRIS IN LOVING MEMORY OF

JOSHUA ELISHA HARRIS

CHAD & KENDRA ORTON IN LOVING MEMORY OF

SARAH JAYNE ORTON

MARY SHELL IN LOVING MEMORY OF

ZERRICK SHELL

MARY & CHARLES W. RADFORD, JR.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

STEVEN GREGORY RADFORD

MARCIA THOMAS-SMITH & GARY A. SMITH

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

JAMES THOMAS SMITH

GINA SPRINGMANN IN LOVING MEMORY OF

COREY ALEXANDER SPRINGMANN

PEARL GREENBAUM IN LOVING MEMORY OF

ALAN SCOTT GREENBAUM

Holiday Donation and Membership Update

Dear Family Members,

*As we near the end of the year, we are asking you to consider making a contribution to The Greater Baltimore Chapter of Compassionate Friends. Our newsletter, phone line, website, outreach efforts and monthly sharing meetings are made possible by your generosity. TCF is a **non-profit organization** and your donations are **tax-deductible**. More importantly, they are vital to the continued operation of your group. If requested, all contributions will be recognized in Loving Memory of your loved one in our newsletter. If you choose to make a donation, please include the completed form below. Please help in whatever way you can. We are deeply grateful for your kindness. If you prefer to not make a donation, please fill out the rest of this form so we can update our contact information. This will assist us in keeping you updated to Chapter events and activities.*

Your Chapter Leadership

*****Holiday Donation*****

Yes, I wish to support the work of The Greater Baltimore Chapter of The Compassionate Friends and help grieving parents and their families by contributing the donation below:

___\$5 ___\$10 ___\$15 ___\$20 ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___Other

(Please make checks payable to: The Greater Baltimore Chapter of The Compassionate Friends)

Given By: _____

In Loving Memory of: _____ Month: _____

____ I / We would like to volunteer my/our time.

____ I / We are making this donation in memory of my/our child(ren) or loved one.

____ I / We do not want the donation acknowledged.

(No donation is required to have your loved one acknowledged in the newsletter for life dates)

If you haven't already given us written permission, and you wish to have your loved one's name included on "Our Children Remembered" page, please fill out this form and mail it to us. We are required to have your written permission to print it.

*****Member Update*****

Please print and complete the information below so we can update your information

Member Name: _____

Other Parent: _____ Spouse/Partner: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name of Loved One(s): _____

Relationship to Loved One(s): _____

Date of Birth: _____ Date of Passing: _____

List Parent(s) as: _____

Name of Grandparents: _____

Names of Siblings: _____

Receive Newsletter: Yes/No Deliver By: Email/US Mail Mention Loved One: Yes/No

Mail Completed Information to: The Greater Baltimore Chapter of TCF

P.O. Box 2103

Ellicott City, MD 21041-2103

**The Greater Baltimore Chapter of Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting Program**

You Are Cordially Invited

Sunday, December 14, 2014 Beginning Promptly at 7:00 PM

**Brown Memorial Church
6200 North Charles Street
Towson, Maryland***

If you wish your child(ren), grandchild, or sibling's name included in the program or to share a story, song or reading as part of the program, let us know by
December 8th.

Please call 410-879-5422 or email your information to Candlelight@BaltimoreTCF.com .
(Email is preferred so we can have the proper spelling)

You are invited to bring:

- ◆ A butterfly with your loved one's name to adorn Madeline's Butterfly Garden (located in the lobby leading to the sanctuary). We will have items available for you to make a butterfly at the Garden.
- ◆ Pictures of your beloved for the Memory Table
- ◆ Desserts for our Reception which is in the Church Parlor immediately after the close of our Candlelighting.

In harmony with:
***The Center for Infant & Child Loss
Baltimore County Department of Health Fetal & Infant Mortality Review Program***

***Route 695/Exit #25 – Charles Street South
Approximately 2 miles on the right.**

***Please assist us as we give a financial donation to the church for their support of our chapter.
They provide their facility as needed for our monthly sharing circles, training and our
Candlelighting.***

