



Newsletter of the San Diego Chapter of "TCF"  
**The Compassionate Friends**  
 A non profit self-help organization for families who are grieving the death of a child.



*These pages Dedicated with Love to:*

July / August  
2016

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Matthew Scott Lewis



Kristina Michelle Bennett

♥ Always In Our Hearts ♥

*Location, see p. 3*

Next Meeting

Wednesday  
July 6th

Wednesday  
Aug. 3rd



John Thomas Gittelson



Joshua James Lubrich

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[www.sdtcf.org](http://www.sdtcf.org)

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## Donations and Love Gifts

**Dedications and Love Gifts go towards the cost of: printing and mailing of this Newsletter; outreach activities to the newly bereaved; and other expenses necessary to continue our chapter in San Diego. These donations are tax deductible. Our sincerest thanks to all who honor their children in this way.**

- ♥ **Con Am is proud to support the efforts of TCF in Loving Memory of Joshua Lubrich, son of Sandi Terrell. TCF gratefully acknowledges Con Am, a business in our community for their generous donation.**
- ♥ **Darlene Sottile — In Loving Memory of her grandson Matthew.**
- ♥ **Yvonne & Lucien Bennett-Niang — In Loving Memory of their daughter . Kristina.**  
It has been ten years since that fatal day when your life was cut short. There is never a day you are not in our hearts and minds, remembering all that you were to us. Happy Birthday dear daughter. We love you forever.  
Love, Mom and Dad
- ♥ **Sandi and Mark Terrell— In Loving Memory of Joshua. To our beloved son & brother, Joshua: We Love You and Miss You Forever and Always!! You will always be our “Jewel” in the family, one to be “Gone But Never Forgotten!” We miss you more with each passing day! You’re still a part of everything we do; you’re on our hearts, just like a tattoo. “Just like a Tattoo, we’ll always have you!” ♥Mom, Dad, Best Friend Zachary and Stephane, Ryan and Kiersten with baby Lily Mae, Andrew and Virginia with baby Andrew Joshua, Best Friend Jason and Brittney with baby Dylan and baby Jayce Benjamin and Best Friends Forever, Persio!**

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### The Long Forever

You left us so quickly;  
there were no goodbyes.  
How long this forever,  
your death and our lives.

The sadness, the anger,  
the loneliness of three,  
preferring four always,  
how small, this new we.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
From *Stars in the Deepest Night—After the Death of a Child*





***Our Children – Loved, Missed and Remembered  
July & August***

**We remember the families of:**



**Birthdays**

***Alan James Hein, born 7-1  
Matthew C. Colbert, born 7-6  
John Thomas Gittelson, born 7-15  
Matthew Steven Spiewak, born 7-17  
Douglas Lorente, born 7-19  
Jerome Allen, born 7-19  
Sara Elizabeth Chandler, born 7-20  
Lisa Trujillo, born 7-23  
Emily Quinlan, born 7-26  
Nicole Clark, born 7-27  
Brittany Star Curcio, born 7-27  
Ellie Kennison, born 7-31  
Trevor Shane Kirby, born 7-31  
Michael Lee Collins, born 8-4  
Derek Reed Thomas, born 8-5  
Andrea Lynn Montisano, born 8-10  
Kashad Harvell, born 8-15  
Delia Kelly Sables, born 8-16  
Lawrence O'Brien, born 8-16  
Julie Hart, born 8-21  
Nick Jellison, born 8-29  
Scott Ray Sturgess, born 8-29  
Nicole Kaitlynn, born 8-30  
Allison Dunn, born 8-31***

**Anniversaries**

***Mark Metz, died 7-1  
Joshua James Lubrich, died 7-1  
Michelle Cleveland, died 7-2  
Hugo Payne, died 7-5  
Kenneth W. McCormick III, died 7-6  
John Thomas Gittelson, died 7-6  
Kristina Michelle Bennett, died 7-12  
Justin Knapp, died 7-28  
Rick E. Pieramico, died 7-30  
Katie R. Dix, died 8-11  
Yehudit Sherman, died 8-2  
Craig Thomas Markley, died 8-2  
Daniel A. Pitcher, died 8-5-1992  
Lindsey Faye Whelchel, , died 8-6  
Brent Foster Whelchel, died 8-6  
Scott Ray Sturgess, died 8-8  
Curtis Hurwitz, died 8-10  
Michael Lee Collins, died 8-11  
David Ward Ray, died 8-13  
Richard Wilson, died 8-14  
Todd Schulman, died 8-17  
David M. Poulin, died 8-19  
Lawrence Wayne Hennessee, died 8-20  
Tyler Preston Collier, died 8-23  
Delia Kelly Sables, died 8-31  
Sumi Suresh, died 8-31***



## Conference Registration

*Preregistration has ended. Onsite registration will be available.*

Adult Registration (ages 18 +) \$130.00 each  
Child Registration (ages 9-17) \$65.00 each  
Full-Time College Student (student ID required at check-in) \$65.00 each  
Walk to Remember Registration \$25.00  
Questions? Please call the National Office at 630.990.0010.

### *Hotel Reservations Update*

#### *Overflow Hotel*

Scottsdale Marriott at McDowell Mountains  
16770 North Perimeter Drive  
Scottsdale, AZ 85260, US

TCF National Office Web Site: [www.compassionatefriends.org/](http://www.compassionatefriends.org/) Phone toll free (877) 969-0010

# TCF National Conference Keynote Speakers



**Alan Pedersen**, *Opening Ceremony Speaker*  
2016 National Conference, Scottsdale, Arizona

Alan is the Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends/USA, a position he has held since December of 2013. In August of 2001, Alan's world changed forever when his 18-year-old daughter Ashley was killed in an automobile accident. After attending TCF meetings in Littleton, Colorado and serving on his steering committee for nearly 2 years, Alan, an award winning singer/songwriter and recording artist began writing songs about the experience of love, loss and trying to find life again after the death of a child. For nearly 10 years Alan traveled to more than 1000 cities across the United States and Canada sharing his music and story and offering support and hope to others in grief. In 2010, Alan was awarded the TCF Professional Award by The Compassionate Friends, and in 2011 he was named the Humanitarian of The Year by the Healing Hearts Foundation. Alan is certified as a Grief Services Provider and lives with his wife Denise in Roseville, California.



**Nivia Vázquez**, *Saturday Evening Dinner Speaker*  
2016 National Conference, Scottsdale, Arizona

Nivia is the bereaved mother of José Francisco "Yoito" Barreto and the bereaved sibling of Teresita and Miguel. Yoito died in a car accident in 1993. His surviving brother is Roberto José. She became involved with The Compassionate Friends after attending an International Conference in 1995 and in 2000 she and five other bereaved parents chartered Los Amigos Compasivos in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She has been Chapter leader for 15 years, is a professional bilingual legal secretary, translator and a professional/personal/spiritual coach. She is a member of TCF Board of Directors, has served on several Board committees, and currently serves as Secretary to the Board.



**Steve Fugate**, *Closing Ceremony Speaker*  
2016 National Conference, Scottsdale, Arizona

I'm Steve Fugate, I'm from Vero Beach, Florida and I'm 70-years-old. In seeking relief from my intense pain of losing both my beautiful children, my son to suicide at 26, while I was hiking the Appalachian Trail which we planned he would do the following year, and then six years later my daughter died at 36, due to an accidental drug overdose. I took to the road walking with a message over my head, "LOVE LIFE." Giving that message of love and life helped to heal me as well as some others. I began calling my endeavors Trail Therapy, and like all trails, it goes both ways. During those eight crossings of America on foot, accumulating over 43,000 miles in 16 years, I spoke to all who would listen about my message of loving life, in hopes of preventing as many as possible from doing what my two precious children did and keeping their parents from facing that horror of horrors! My creed: *"To mend the broken heart while it is yet beating."*

## Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will

know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.

Sascha Wagner

## Vacations

Vacation time can be painful for bereaved parents. Caught up with normal demands of making a living or keeping a household going, we have less time to think than we do on vacations, especially the "take it easy" kind—at a hideaway, tucked away somewhere.

In the summers following Tricia's death, I found vacations could bring a special kind of pain. We avoided going to places where we had vacationed with her. At one time, I thought Williamsburg might be off my list forever since we had a very happy time together there. I tried it one summer three years later and found that she walked the cobbled streets with me. Now that nine years have passed and the pain has eased, maybe the happy memories we shared in Williamsburg can heighten the pleasure of another visit there.

For the first few years after Tricia's death, we found fast-paced vacations at places we had never been before, to be the best. The stimulation of new experiences in new places with new people refreshed us and sent us home more ready to pick up our grief work. That is not to say when we did something or saw something that Tricia would have enjoyed, we didn't mention her. We did, but it seemed less painful than at home.

One caution: Do allow enough time for sleep; otherwise, an exhausted body can depress you.

We've said it many times: **YOU HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY, YOUR OWN PEACE.** Let vacation time be another try at that; but do give yourself a break in choosing the time and locale where that can best be accomplished. Don't be afraid of change—it can help with your re-evaluation of life.

Elizabeth Estes  
TCF Augusta, GA  
In Memory of Tricia

## The Tree in Our Backyard

My daughter Lesa was a free spirited child who always had something to say, who enjoyed school and loved life. One day, as part of a school project, she planted a tree in our back yard and announced that she had named the tree Angella. Lesa watered the tree daily, fertilized it, talked to it, and finally placed stakes in the ground to give it more support to help the tree grow straight. Lesa watched over this tree she named Angella with determination and a certain amount of pride that she was able to nurture a spindly, leafless tree into a blossoming life-giving part of nature.

One day our daughter Leslie was mowing the lawn and accidentally hit the tree. Lesa witnessed this event from an upstairs window and immediately flew down the steps to confront her sister. A confrontation followed between the two girls, with Lesa demanding an apology. Leslie told me later that she did, in fact, go over to Lesa's tree, pat it on the trunk and apologize. Laughing, she told me it was not only the first time she had spoken to a tree but also the first time she had apologized to one.

Angella the tree continued to flourish and grow, watched over and nurtured by my daughter. Lesa, however, became ill with cancer. As her cancer worsened, she was unable to watch over Angella. Before our last trip to the hospital, Lesa visited the tree and discovered bumps on the leaves. We delayed our trip to spray the tree to reassure Lesa that her tree would be safe while she was in the hospital.

Lesla died on a hot summer day in August, two days before her eighth birthday. We moved away from that house, hoping to find some peace in a new environment and we transplanted Lesa's tree Angella to the back yard of our new home. We watched it closely, wondering if the tree would survive the transplant. Our special friends who knew the story of Lesa's tree shared its progress with us.

Several years later we sold our home, but this time Lesa's tree was too big to transplant. I wrote the story of Lesa's tree and how she named it Angella and how Lesa had died of cancer and I left it on the kitchen counter for the new owners, hoping they would take care of the tree.

Several months passed while I considered contacting the owners, and then one day I met the daughter of the family that now lives in our old home. She stopped to tell me that the story of Lesa's tree had been passed on to them and that they would guard Lesa's legacy for us. She described how her family had been touched by this story and they were planning to pass on the story should they move in the future.

So, the legacy of a child's love of nature and determination to take care of a special tree goes on. My daughter did not survive her cancer but the story of Angella the tree has touched the lives of every family that has lived in our house.

Pat Langford  
TCF North Platte, NE  
In Memory of my daughter, Lesa

## STANDING

*People say  
"Oh you are doing so well,  
you are so strong,  
you are an inspiration!"  
We do not feel strong.*

*We feel shaken to the core,  
Saddened beyond belief,  
Pain beyond comprehension,  
Forever changed.*

*What do they see that we cannot see?*

*"That a horrible storm,  
unexpectedly ripped through  
our lives and we are  
still standing"*

*They are amazed  
We are paralyzed*

*Still Standing*

Julie Short  
TCF Southeastern Illinois Chapter  
In Memory of Kyra



## Good-bye Dearest Debi

It brings sadness to our hearts in hearing of Debi Gittelson's death on June 14. Debi, along with her husband George, and others, helped to establish and maintain our local TCF Chapter in San Diego. Their untiring devotion and great assist to our chapter continued for several years. Their only child, John, died in July 1994. They made their home here locally and only recently moved to Battle Ground, WA. Our heartfelt sympathy and prayers to George and their families.

Thank you for doing so much for us.

## I'm Still Counting

My son's favorite character on Sesame Street was 'The Count'. Todd would laugh and count and laugh some more whenever the count would appear on PBS. "Come on, Mom," he would say, "count with me." So, I would join him and we would count together.

When my child died, I started counting hours. One hour since he died, two hours, then 24 hours, 36 hours, 96 hours. I started counting weeks, then months and finally years. I was totally focused on the moment that my son left this earth.

Now I count the years and months, weeks and days. While this may not sound like progress, it truly is a step back into life. Three years, seven months, one week and one day. I stopped adding the hours. Moreover, when people ask me about it, I generally say about 3 1/2 years. I try to keep it simple for outsiders who can't begin to understand.

Every month I dread the 19th. Another month is added to the time between my son's last breath and now. It's almost as if time might separate us, erase him from the memory of those who knew and loved him.

Despite my obsession with counting, I am moving forward in many ways. I think of my child each day, I honor his life each day, and I feel a real apprehension about his daughters each day. Their lives are horribly different from what they might have been if Todd had lived. Their values will be so jaded compared with his values; their experiences of personal growth are miniscule compared to what Todd would have given them. I know I cannot change this. So along with this private obsession, there is

deep lingering sadness for my son's children and for opportunities lost.

In the meantime, I count years, months and days. I keep my unconditional love for my child in my heart and in my life. And I continue to reach out and become the person I am meant to be. And I'm still counting with Todd.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

## Dancing in the Flame

Though I am tired and weary,  
My eyes continue to weep,  
And my heart denies me the comfort,  
That I find only in my sleep.

So I sit alone in the darkness,  
Before the firelight,  
And stare into the flames,  
On this dark and moonless night.

As the flames leap and dance,  
I am surrounded by an eerie sight,  
That evokes haunting memories,  
Brought to life by the fire's light.

My thoughts take me back,  
To a time when you were here,  
To times when laughter filled my heart,  
Times lost forever, I fear.

In the flames, I see your face,  
Your sweet and loving smile.  
And I know that we will meet again,  
But I must wait a while.

These quiet moments of reverie,  
Bring comfort to my aching heart,  
And tell me that you and I,  
Are never far a part.

Now my heart begins to lighten,  
As sleep arrives to claim,  
The pain I felt just moments ago,  
Before I saw you dancing in the flame.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux  
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# A Glimpse of Last Year's Conference in Texas



Ruth



Ruth & David Keyser



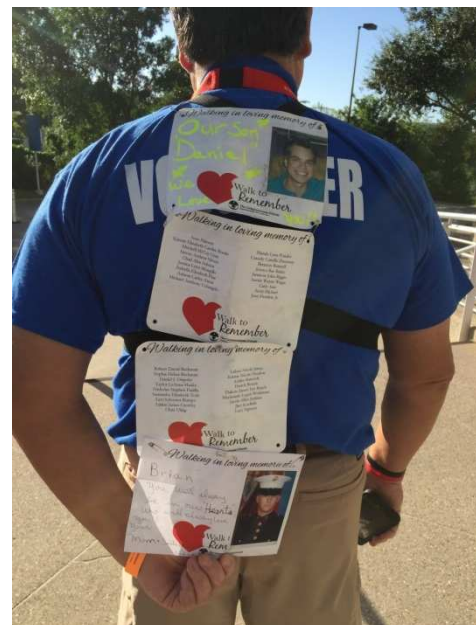
Grace Saputo, Ruth & David Keyser



David, Friends, Ruth



Candle-Lighting Service



Ready for Walking

**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS  
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**① OUR LOCAL WEB SITE**

Visit the San Diego Chapter homepage:

[www.sdtcf.org](http://www.sdtcf.org)

Email: [leaders@sdtcf.org](mailto:leaders@sdtcf.org)

The San Diego chapter home page has information about our chapter and links to more grief resources.

TCF Regional Coordinator  
Olivia Garcia 818-736-7380  
[oliviabgarcia1@gmail.com](mailto:oliviabgarcia1@gmail.com)

**① OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES**

**MADD** 858-564-0780  
**Empty Cradle** 619-595-3887  
**Jenna Druck Foundation** 619-294-8000  
**Survivors of Suicide** 619-482-0297  
[info@SOSLsd.org](mailto:info@SOSLsd.org)  
**Bereaved Parents of the USA**  
[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)

**Parents of Murdered Children National** 888-818-POMC  
**Local** 619-281-3972

**Alive Alone - for now childless parents** [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org)

**① INFORMATION ON THE NET**

Visit the TCF national homepage:  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

The national home page is filled with information and grief resources on-line. A "chat" room for on-line discussion with bereaved families is available.

**Chat Room schedule:**

Mon 9-10 pm EST: General Bereavement  
Mon 10-11pm EST: Men's Chat  
Tue 9-10 pm EST: Pregnancy and Infant Death  
Thur 8-9 pm EST: No surviving children  
Thur 9-10 pm EST: Siblings (Minimum age is 13)  
Thur 10-11 pm: Grieving Alone (Single parents)

**member web/e-mail**

<http://www.RickPieramico.com>

Charlene Tate  
[caricat83@hotmail.com](mailto:caricat83@hotmail.com)

Elene Bratton  
[jamiesjoy@simplynet.com](mailto:jamiesjoy@simplynet.com)  
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Tami Carter [haley1@san.rr.com](mailto:haley1@san.rr.com)

**TCF INFORMATION PACKAGE**

If you would like to send an information package on TCF to someone you think could benefit, (either for themselves or others) phone 619-583-1555. Leave a message with your name and phone number and the name and full address of the person you would like to receive the package.

*Be a compassionate friend*

**Our Lost Children's Photos for Newsletter**

The recommended donation for your child's photo in our newsletter is \$30. Children's pictures will be in color. Donations and love gifts are always greatly appreciated.

**WE WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS**



Deadline for submission to the  
**September / October 2016**

Issue of  
The Compassionate Friend is

**August 10, 2016**

We warmly welcome your contributions, both original and inspirational writings. Please indicate sources of any non-original texts.



## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Supporting Family After a Child Dies  
San Diego County Chapter

11582 Fury Lane #118, El Cajon, CA 92019

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

July / August 2016

### Love Gifts

*Donations and love gifts in memory of your loved one enable us to reach bereaved parents with telephone calls and information, and help defray newsletter and mailing expenses. Please indicate any special tribute you wish printed in our newsletter. When making a donation, please specify the San Diego chapter. Make your checks payable to:*

**The Compassionate Friends, San Diego Chapter, 11582 Fury Ln. #118. El Cajon, CA. 92019**

From: \_\_\_\_\_ In Memory Of: \_\_\_\_\_

### TCF The Compassionate Friends *newsletter application*

New Address

New subscription

Remove from list

Please send newsletter by regular mail.

By email, address \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of death: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Cause: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Your relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings/Ages: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like my child's name to be listed on the anniversary pages of the chapter newsletter

Yes, I would like my child's name to be listed on the anniversary pages of the chapter web site  
If you have lost more than one child, please use a separate form for each child.