



The Compassionate Friends

Minneapolis Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

8701 36th Ave N
New Hope, MN 55427

MEETING SCHEDULE

OFFERING HYBRID MONTHLY MEETINGS

ATTEND IN-PERSON OR VIA ZOOM

We meet 7:00–8:30 pm on the third Monday of each month. Join us:

In Person: St. Joseph Parish Community
8701 36th Ave N., New Hope, MN

Via Zoom: Register using the link emailed a few days prior to each meeting.

Bereaved Siblings Hybrid Meeting

A bereaved sibling facilitates the group. Siblings (14+) meet at the same time and place (in-person & Zoom) as our Chapter meeting, but break into their own group for support & conversation.

Monday, February 20

“Using Our 5 Senses to Remember”

HYBRID (In-person & Zoom) MEETING

When one of our senses is activated, it reminds us of our loved one. Maybe it’s a scent, a song, or seeing a similar vehicle they drove. Remembering is one way to help keep a loved one’s memories alive.

Monday, March 20

“Opioid Loss Inspires Public Health Legacy”

HYBRID (In-person & Zoom) MEETING

Opioid overdose remains a leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. Join Julie Bartell & Billy Binder, whose son, Kerry Norrid, died due to an unintentional overdose, along with Alex Larson of the Wilder Foundation who will educate and train members how to help individuals at risk for overdose. Having the knowledge and tools to help could save a life. See article on page 4.

Monday, April 17

“Finding Help for a Grieving Heart”

HYBRID (In-person & Zoom) MEETING

Since grief is different for every person, each individual’s journey is unique. There is a myriad of resources, but how do you find them? This session shares some tools that may help navigate a path forward where pain softens and hope emerges.

We Need Not Walk Alone

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child at any age, from any cause, is welcome. Our meetings give parents the opportunity to talk about their child and feelings as they go through the grieving process. Our meetings are also open to grandparents, older siblings, and extended family. There are no membership dues. There is no religious affiliation.

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. **The Mission** of The Compassionate Friends is to provide highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, a brother or sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

The Secret of TCF’s Success is Simple: As seasoned grievers reach out to the newly bereaved, energy that has been directed inward begins to flow outward, and both are helped to heal.

To Our New Members: Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose, and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting might be the time you find the right person...or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Members Further Down the ‘Grief Road’: We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting, we have new parents, grandparents, and siblings. Think back, what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF “veterans” to welcome you and share your grief?

About Our Meetings: Please don’t stay away from a meeting because the scheduled topic does not interest you. At each meeting there will be time to discuss and share whatever is on your mind. We welcome your participation, but it is not required.

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TCF’s Vision...
That everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

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Lending Library
David Benson

Special Events Co-coordinators
Vickie Hackel & Monica Colberg

Sibling Loss Facilitator
Maggie Bauer

Steering Committee Meetings
Held quarterly to plan events and Chapter direction. Next meeting: April 14.

TCF NATIONAL OFFICE

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Those who have SUFFERED
UNDERSTAND SUFFERING
and therefore



Articles printed in this newsletter reflect the author's personal views, and not necessarily the opinion of the newsletter editor or The Compassionate Friends.

RESOURCES

Chapter Locator Tool available on TCF National Website
[Locate Chapter Here](#) www.compassionatefriends.org

Minneapolis Chapter Website:
tcfmpls.org

MPLS Chapter Is On Facebook:



Join our Minneapolis Chapter's private Facebook community online:
[TCF Mpls](#)

Or log onto Facebook and search:
TCF Mpls

www.facebook.com/groups/TCFMpls

National Organization Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

There are several options under "Resources" and "Find Support"

- **Online Grief-Related Webinar Series**
- **Online Support Communities**
- **National Magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®**
- **Facebook Closed (Private) Groups**

[TCF/USA National Facebook Page](#)
www.facebook.com/TCFUSA

Save the Date! TCF 46th National Conference Denver, CO – July 7-9, 2023

Every summer, bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings come together at TCF's annual National Conference and find a community of people who truly understand and who get it.

Conference offerings include over 100 workshops covering a multitude of topics, keynote speakers, sharing sessions, musical performances and more. This opportunity for connection and education provides valuable support whether you're grieving a recent loss or are a long-time griever.

Make plans to set aside the July 7-9 weekend to spend time focused on your loved one, sharing memories and stories. Join others who find this a helpful, heart-warming experience.

Registration details, Hotel location, discounted rates with room block info will be announced in the next month. compassionatefriends.org

More Opportunities

The International Day of **Hope & Healing after Loss Conference**

Date: Monday, March 6, 2023 Time: 11:00 am - 4:00 pm Central Time

A FREE online experience brought to you by the Open to Hope Foundation with the mission of helping people find hope after loss. Expert presenters will share their time, talents, and advice with you on the unique day.

For more info and to **REGISTER:** <https://www.opentohope.com/conference/>

Brighter Days Grief Center: 5th Annual Run/Walk to Remember

Date: Saturday, May 20, 2023 Time: 9:00 am - Noon

Help raise funds for their free programs while honoring the ones we love and miss. Our Chapter will be among the many resource tables at the event.

<https://brighterdaysgriefcenter.org/event/run-walk-to-remember/>

The Elixir of Hope

The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.

~ Simon Stephens, Founder TCF

Love Gifts



"Love Gifts" provide our Chapter's basics like meeting supplies, outreach, rent, newsletter printing & postage, and help fulfill our "wish list" items.

We greatly appreciate all donations, regardless of amount, in support of our chapter!

Thank you to the following members for Love Gifts received in the past year.

Donation In Memory Of: By TCF Member/Family:

Paul & John	Kelly Barrett
Christopher	Bruce & Mary Bauer
Chris	Maggie Bauer
Abe	David Benson
David Lindgren	Jeffrey and Janet Bowers
Jack Kocur	Larry Brauch
Alex	Tom & Julie Cahoy
Art	Monica Colberg
Luke	Carolyn Crotteau
Luke	Jason & Amy, & Kaylie Crotteau
Kristin Reller	Matt Cummins
Melissa	Steve & Marilyn Dahlmeir
Matthew, Daniel, Carolyn	Robert and Barbara Demsky
Zakery	Barbara Demsky
Lauren	Dawn Duwenhoegger
Missy & Corey	Mary Feigh
Leon Harwood	Flipper (Antonia) Filipiak
Keith Demry	Char Fonville
Mark	Donna Frain
Jen	Gary and Karen Gross
Natalie	Vickie Hackel
Carissa	Linda Hayen
Alec Smith	Anne Holtzclaw
Kyle Jappe	Mary Jappe
Jory Day-Monroe	Mary Klingelhoets
Jack Kocur & Kevin	Jan Kocur
Hunter	Sandra Lawver
Andrea	Martin and Joan Leeper
Michelle Marie Franta	Lynn & Stan Liedman
Kendra	Tom & Terri Lindfors
Mark	Bev London
Daniel	Audrey Nelson
Kendra Lindfors	Grant & Kayla Olson
Kaare	Kristi & Rick Patterson
Karla & Steffanie	Jan Quick
Steffanie & Karla	Kevin & Sue Quick
Alex Reem	Sandra Reem
Ron	Sharon Reinert
Kristin Reller	Pat & Don Reller
Shayde Erin Rudenick	Stephen Rudenick
Art Colberg	Jessica Schultz
Evelyn Charlotte	Jeff & Jenny Sevaldson
Natalie Perry Smead	Peter Smead
Nancy Wells	Candice Wilson

Leader's Corner

Timing is everything. Easy to say, easy to believe. Seasoned griever understand everything changes when time runs out for those magnificent, loved ones of ours. Time is triaged to Before and After. I was a catastrophic rehab project with very few rails to hold.

Someone directed me to TCF because of their child loss. I watched people like me smiling. I learned by example to talk or write or express my sorrow and open myself to joyful memories with my child.

It takes time. It works. We do heal. To our newer TCF members, hold on. Talk with siblings. Talk with parents. We will walk with you through your sorrow. We can direct you towards your smiles.

Monica Colberg
Art's Mom and TCF Minneapolis Chapter Leader

Free Lending Library

Our Minneapolis chapter of The Compassionate Friends is fortunate to have a library of books pertaining to many aspects of grief. They are available to take home to read and then return when you are done with them. Please feel free to browse our library cart at a meeting. There are many titles from varying perspectives. You may also contribute books that you found helpful.

Literary Perspectives

***Passed & Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive* Book by Allison Gilbert**

This book provides many, many ways to move memories of those we have lost into physical objects that in turn activate our memories as we encounter these objects in our daily lives. With the book's many suggestions, several are likely to resonate with each of us. One illusive example: Make up a shadow box with a couple of blue ribbons she won at swim meets, a photo of her relay team and copies of a couple of articles about her team's successes. The process of putting it together can be a healing activity. Then with the finished shadow box placed in your home it can provide the occasional stimulus for remembering her as well as remembering our healing activity of putting it together.

The ideas in this book will tend to attract those of us that are more oriented to crafting, but some of the ideas are easier to put together. It might be good for the less "crafty" among us to have physical manifestations of our memories and healing.

This one-of-a-kind guide not only inspires transforming objects into cherished keepsakes, Allison also shares how important it is to celebrate loved ones through stories and conversation, connecting and keeping memories alive for ourselves and future generations.

~ Chapter Librarian, David Benson

Spring Waiting

Winter's end is almost here.
 Crocus struggle in the snow.
 Sunlight has a softer glow.
 Is the winter long this year?
 Spring waits, watching for a cue...
 Not to rush your grief away.
 But to be there, when you say,
 Spring is waiting, friend, for you.
 Find a little time for Spring,
 Even if your days are troubled.
 Let a little sunshine in
 Let your memories be doubled.
 Take a little time to see
 All the things your child was seeing—
 And your tears will help your heart
 Find a better time for being.

—Sascha Wagner

Gratitude

After much time, I recovered from our oldest son Jim's death, and I realized that Life was still good! I took great joy in continuing to golf and enjoying friends and family, and it felt so good to laugh again! That's when the "Gratitude" began...

Then, our surviving son Jeff passed away...again, the tears and anger and guilt...for a long time, it seemed... I don't remember how long but it seemed like years, and may have been...but once again I realized that Life was still good! So, again I laughed, enjoying my family and friends, and favorite pastimes.

My husband Wayne was there to hug me and love me and comfort me when our boys died. We loved and hugged each other, shocked to realize that it had started with the two of us, and now we were back to just the two of us....certainly it was not what we had expected of our lives as we grew old together.

Now, I've lost my dear Wayne who was there when each of the boys died. No more hugs! Wayne would say, "That's three hugs today already! You're getting spoiled!"

While Wayne was in Palliative Care at the hospital, I spent time talking to the Hospital Chaplain (whose name is Jim!) One day, when I had asked the nurses to call him (it had been a particularly bad day for me and I had broken down), Jim came on the run. After I had cried, talked and calmed down, I started telling him how lucky I was to have such a loving family...and good friends...and so many things to be grateful for...

Chaplain Jim said, "Did you know that Gratitude is the highest form of Prayer?" So, apparently I've been "Praying" a lot for a number of years now...ever since I learned that Life is still good!

And it will be good again...I just need to work through this loss with the help of those who love me, and be Grateful for the time Wayne and I had with our boys, and for the time we had, just the two of us, at the end...

Written with love for Wayne,
 Joan Conley, Wayne's wife and Jim & Jeff's mom
 TCF Kamloops, B.C. CA

Overdose Prevention

Our life changed forever on May 31, 2020 when our son, Kerry Norrid, died alone in his car parked in front of his home in Minneapolis. He died from ingesting a substance in the tiniest amount – about the size of the tip of a pencil. The substance was fentanyl and it was deadly. If he hadn't been alone, or had been able to test the substance, or if someone had stopped to help him as he slumped over in the car, perhaps he would be alive today.

Alex Larson of the Wilder Foundation is trained in the practice of administering Naloxone, a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose. He will be joining us at the March meeting to talk about overdose awareness and provide kits for testing and providing help to individuals who have possibly overdosed.

An editorial article by writer Robin Abcarian of the *Los Angeles Times* was reprinted in the *Star Tribune* on Thursday, December 8, 2022. The title of the article is "All Must Enlist in the War on Fentanyl."

From this article we learn:

- One pill can kill. Just say no.
- Poisoning by illicit fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for adults aged 18 to 45 in the U.S., says the federal government, surpassing suicide, gun violence and car accidents.

An average of three such (overdose) deaths occur in Minnesota every day. That is 1,000 deaths a year just in Minnesota and more than 100,000 a year in the U.S. in 2021.

As parents of an unintentional overdose victim, we do not bow to a stigma about addiction or overdose death but rather we want to do whatever we can to save a life.

Julie Bartell and Billy Binder
 TCF Minneapolis, MN

Grief Support for substance use-related deaths:

Free six-week series, meets virtually via Zoom.
 New course begins **March 29th**. Registration required.
 For more info: beckiillehei@gmail.com.
 Sponsored by brighterdaysgriefcenter.org



The truth is, that hole in your heart
 shaped exactly the size and shape of your child
WILL NEVER, EVER GO AWAY.

But the *love* that oozes from it has
more power to change the world

than anything I've ever known.

Angela Miller

Our Children Remembered...on Their Birthdays

Loved...Missed...Forever in Our Hearts



February

CHILD	MEMBER
J. D.	Cathy Bailly
Elyse Mary Stern	Robin Stern
Michael Stephen Kronick	Micki Herman Kay
Charlotte	Jon & Angie Downing
Brandon	Maya Lawrence
Brandon	Melanie Lawrence-Smith
Alice	Suzanna Bess & Carrie Johnson
Christopher Bormann	Susan Bormann
Claire Richards	Gail Manning & David Richards
Benjamin	Todd & Debbie Huberty
Troy Perron	Gin Johnson
John Porter	Linda Dundas
Noah Tweed	Dennis & Sandee Tweed
Kevin Williams	Shirley Williams
Kevin Williams	Kim and Ken Williams
Amanda	Dave & Deb Nordgaard
Lori Jensen	Christine Jensen
Harriet	Stephen & Fiona Burgdorf
Chris	Maggie Bauer
Christopher	Mary & Bruce Bauer
Aiden	Mary Sullivan
Scott	Mary Blumb
Paul Just	Sarah Barrett
Paul Just	Kelly Barrett

March

CHILD	MEMBER
David Nelson	Jill Harrison
Zachary	Darcie Rummel
Adam	Kathryn Waters
Harry Richards	Winnie Visco
Aaron Carlton	Kristi Strom
John Michael Morgan	Jane Morgan
David	Gabrielle Robbins
David	Christiane Robbins
Robby Andrew Wallenberg Bragg	Linda Wallenberg
Michael	Laura Bottenfield
Caleb	Paul & Perla Morley
Alexander	Susan & Ed Herrmann
Murdoch	Cory Crust
Murdoch	Nicole Crust

April

CHILD	MEMBER
Samantha	Julie & John Bangsund
Chad Goodspeed	Brenna Goodspeed
Chad Goodspeed	Betty Udseth
Ashley	Randy Segal & Michon Jenkin
Peter	Eric Strommen
April Jo	Jody Rieck
Michael	Jean Shilinski
Matthew (Matt)	Stephen & Carol Hawk
Stefanie	Jayne Darling
Aaron Ginsberg	Leonora Ginsberg
Cristian	Sara & John Schmidt
Cora	Danielle Grinsel
Abe	David Benson
Mark Frain	Michael & Terri Frain
Mark Frain	Donna Frain

Morning Thoughts

The morning walk from the bus to work takes 10 minutes. It is my opportunity to plumb random thoughts in my head to see what's cooking on the inside.

This morning I thought about an upcoming wedding for my sweet, talented niece. The couple has selected a gorgeous venue in the High Sierras for their celebration. The women will wear long, swirling gowns. Mine is already hanging in the closet. I will dance with my new partner, Scott. I look forward to that light, airy moment when the dancing begins.

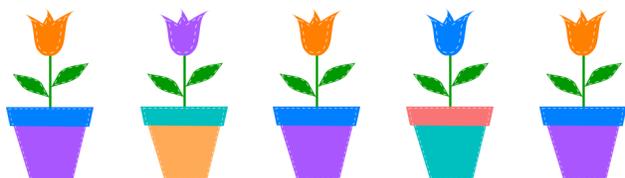
I would have danced at this wedding with my son Art had he lived to see that day. Five years ago I would have danced with Art at his sister Jessica's wedding had he lived to see that day.

My son's sudden death eight years ago broke me. My spouse's death four years later hurt me. Somehow I reassembled to live life fully. I would not be defined by their deaths. Role models were there aplenty at monthly TCF meetings. I wanted to be like them.

I learned that a grief journey is unique and dynamic. It was not quick or easy, but today my life is thrilling again and fulfilling. I still grieve and always will.

Someday, in a different form, I will dance with my son. That will be a celebration too. I miss him; at times to a breaking point. In the calm moments of my day, I hold my son and my husband in my heart and I live in present moment.

Monica Colberg, Art's Mom
TCF Minneapolis MN
Art died at the age of 20 in May 2004



Birthday Month

Birthdays are given special recognition at our monthly meetings. During your child/sibling/grandchild's birthday month, you are invited to bring a photo or memorabilia to share and display on our Birthday Table. Some like to sign up to bring a favorite snack or treat (even birthday cake) to celebrate the birthday of their child. If you're attending via Zoom, we invite you to share your photo during introductions.

Our Beloved Children...in Our Hearts Always

especially during the Remembrance Month of their death.



February

CHILD		MEMBER
James		Samantha & Michael Wallad
Tommy		Sheryl Hutton
Alex		Sandra Reem
David Nelson		Jill Harrison
Sarah Tilman		Cathie Tilman
Mitch	sibling	Rachel Shapiro
Ben Freidson	sibling	Debe Fefferman
Benjamin Freidson	sibling	Jenne Freidson
Brandon	sibling	Maya Lawrence
Brandon		Melanie Lawrence-Smith
Alice		Suzanna Bess & Carrie Johnson
Jeremy Klein		Chris Klein
Matthew		Mary Curtis
Allisa Feldman		Harley & Elayne Feldman
Elsy Kirabo		Mary Jo & Winston Peterson
Ben Hansen	sibling	Taylor Gotta
Ben		Karen & Gary Hansen
Scott		Mary Blumb
Christopher		Judi Callas
Sadie Hanson		Dani Hanson
Alex		Chuck & Trudi Campbell
Persephonee		Chris & Ameer Banks
Thomas Scott		Dianne & Bill Jeffery

March

CHILD		MEMBER
Abigail Grace		Tom & Christina Monroe
Missy	sibling	Tasha Feigh
Missy		Mary Feigh
Juli Elisabeth	sibling	Melissa Myers and Michael Crees
Juli Elisabeth		Lisa & Steve Crees
Juliette		Nancy Kilhan
Sullivan		Holly Holmes
Campbell		Jenner Johnson
Jory Day-Monroe	sibling	Seaira Garcia
Jory Day-Monroe	grandchild	Mary Klingelhoets
Steffanie Quick	grandchild	Jan Quick
Steffanie Quick	sibling	Matthew Quick
Steffanie		Kevin & Sue Quick
John Alden		Mary & John Alden
Keith Rosenwinkel		Wanda VonHoltum
Jaden Dallas Dalton		Karren Gray
Michelle Franta	sibling	Jeff & Melia Liedman
Michelle Marie Franta		Lynn & Stan Liedman
Ben Alden		Mary & John Alden
Kendra		Tom & Terri Lindfors
Kendra	sibling	Cole Lindfors
Ryan		Renee Torbenson
Matthew		Sue Reid & Mark Schmidt
Kyle		Lynd Kubousek
Cole Linnell		Jean Thurmer
Brenden		Tammy Sperr
Shayde Erin Rudenick		Steve Rudenick
Ben Rueben		Melissa Fischer
Melissa Roeser		Marilyn & Steve Dahlmeier
Nicole Jean Gallery		Janna Gallery

March (continued)

CHILD		MEMBER
Lauren		Nancy Riesgraf
Paul		Pilar & Steve Hoenack
Kimberly		Donna W.
Grayson Jett		Brian & Jennifer Jett
Lauren		Dawn & Peter Duwenhoegger
Michael Stephen Kronick		Micki Herman Kay
Ross Alvin Joseph Stenerson		Barbara Stenerson
Barrett Ugland		Renee Forst
Gregory Sather	sibling	Eric Sather
Gregory Sather		Nancy Sather
Gregory Sather	sibling	Joelle & Paul Valentini
Scott		Harriet Lodermeier
Scott	sibling	Cori Plehal
Daniel Hirschberger	sibling	Anna & Todd Lundblad
Daniel Hirschberger		Linda Schaeffer
Jordan		Leslie Holt
John Michael Morgan	sibling	Jane Morgan
Elyse Mary Stern		Robin Stern

April

CHILD		MEMBER
Zachary		Connie Theis
Abe		David Benson
John Pecnik	sibling	Jeanne Klein
Spencer Johnson		Ann Perry
Jesi		Pat & Sue Harding
Rachel Merchant		Deb Merchant
Noah Tweed		Dennis & Sandee Tweed
Michael Habte		Debra Hudson
Jenna Rietmulder		Jay & Holli Rietmulder
Paul Just	sibling	Sarah Barrett
Paul Just		Kelly Barrett
Molly		Pat, Charlie & Tyler Brown
Michael James Lewis		Joanne Lewis
Joseph Daniel Muonio		Michael & Anita Muonio
Calob		Jessica Bartram
Kevin Williams		Shirley Williams
Kevin Williams	sibling	Kim and Ken Williams
Khari Dixon		Arineith Imani
Vincent		Jeff Lewis
Sarah		Jane Ramerth & Marc Friedman
Amanda		Dave & Deb Nordgaard
Cynthia		Liz Keller
Anne		Carol Just
Tracy Greenwood	sibling	Tanya Broten
Conner Box-Lindholm		Stacey Lindholm
Tony		Tina Mehok
John Porter		Linda Dundas
Hallie		Todd & Kathy Brown
Dominic		Aaron Cepeda
Alexis	sibling	Brandon Jensen
Alexis		Sandie Jensen
Corey	sibling	Tasha Feigh
Corey		Mary Feigh

The Hurricane of Addiction

My name is Nancy and I work as a para-professional with special education children in Long Beach, NY. Each day I walk in my classroom and feel sad for those children whose lives may be taken away by the wrong choices. Once, my child, Jesse, was so full of life too. How I wish I could go back!

Not a day goes by that I don't wonder what my son would be doing if he were still on this earth. He was a talented wrestler for his high school, a talented drummer from a very early age, and had a gift of making people laugh.

Jesse was diagnosed as ADHD very early in life. His energy and wit were contagious, but in school it was an issue. He felt different even during the short period of time where he took his medicine as prescribed.

Jesse stopped his ADHD medicine and, I believe, started self medicating with Xanax and Valium. I searched and searched for a rehab that took 15-year-olds, but after 10 days in the facility I found, our insurance refused to pay. I had to bring him home. I didn't have the financial capability to keep him there for a month. I believe that was his one chance at life, before his addiction progressed.

He tried again and again, and the ups and downs went on and on. My hope of him being able to stop was diminishing. I used to fear that I would get that phone call every time the phone rang. His brothers tried to talk to him, but he hid his ongoing addiction from everyone.

When Jesse was 19, Hurricane Sandy hit our town. At that time, he was in recovery for two years. Within minutes, our house was 75-percent destroyed. All our possessions on the first floor were destroyed and our cars were gone. I spent the next year trying to find ways to fix my house back up and make sure all my sons had transportation to get to college. I was also looking for a job, as the hospital I worked in at that time was destroyed and condemned.

In the middle of it all, Jesse relapsed. Jesse confided in me that his addiction to OxyContin had turned into a heroin addiction: it was easier to find and cheaper. Once again, I found myself writing letters to rehabs. I tried everyone, even the President of the United States and Eric Clapton, who owns a rehab. I was desperate and Jesse was too. My bank account was wiped out, between the rehabs and the storm. All I wanted was my son back!

After a short stay at a rehab in Florida, he remained in recovery for about four months. He was so happy to be home. He rode his bike on the boardwalk, played his drums, hung out with his brothers and friends, and even praised my home cooked meals. Life seemed normal again.

But on Thursday, December 12, 2013, Jesse came to talk to me. He was noticeably high. My heart sank. I decided for once not to talk with him or nag him in any way, and just keep the peace. I had every intention of having a talk with him the next morning. But on Friday, I was still upset so I went straight to work instead.

My phone kept vibrating in my pocket and I walked into a hallway to look at it. It was a text from my son, Zach. Mom, pick up your phone. Mom, Jesse is dead in his bed!

That is the day my heart broke forever. I am still broken and miss my child more and more each day that passes. I am still angry with our health insurance system and the lack of rehabs for all ages.

It will be four years this December that I lost my sweet, kind, funny boy. I am crying right now at the thought of never seeing him again. His addiction killed him and affected everyone in my family. His addiction wiped us out financially.

But I would do it all again, for him.

I love you, Jesse Mark Barnett: always and forever.

Nancy Rossetti – *Blog: People Facing Addiction, Oct. 16, 2017*

What If?

We followed a silver Mustang to New York on Friday. My mother and I. Traveling from my home farther south. The boys buckled tightly in the back. It had black stripes on the hood and the windows were too dark to see inside. Like his.

We joined minds, spoke without speaking, and imagined the unimaginable. That he was still here. That it was his. His Mustang, zipping up and down the Belt Parkway in Canarsie, in Flatbush, in his Brooklyn. Visiting this and that, her and her, blasting his music, picking up the pieces, the bits, for the collection, for his soul. We imagined, jointly. It's like we both heard the whisper; a soft, silent whisper, "What if?" "What if?" it said.

What if October 22, 2009, never was? The cloudless sky on that sunny, sorrowful, unexpected day. The day my brother's soul ended its tangible journey beside us. The day that concluded us as we were and began as we are. "What if?" we whispered. He whispered.

What if... He was here all along? What if it was as simple as catching up to him on his drive? What if we would find him watching a waterfall in Saratoga? Eating a Klondike bar in Elmont? Outside of a repair shop, getting a car service that took a little too long. Or what if we found him parked in my mother's driveway in Queens at home?

What if we had just been blinded by a bizarre streak of glaring sunlight? Cast from a low-flying plane? It was possible because we grew up by the airport. What if we had missed him standing there all along, and that man we watched leave us on 10/22 wasn't my brother at all? It was someone else's brother, someone else's son, someone else's... What if when the glare cleared he would appear? Smirking. Buffing a small finger print from his side-view mirror and walking over to us with his heavy steps to make some joke about the latest current event. What if we had another chance to kiss his warm cheeks and cover him in our embrace? Make my mother smile again...from the inside? What if he could tickle my sons and meet my dear Wesley, his namesake?

We raced alongside that silver Mustang. Watching and waiting, wondering and willing, wondering and willing...life. We wondered, "What if?" We tried desperately to mask the quick sounds of our breaths as we chased this dream. We chastised our souls for wanting to bound toward him and dance in the unimaginable. To morph what wasn't into what is and make this impossible our possible. But it wasn't... The universe curses us with unexplained gifts.

That driver snuck off at an exit before we could see for ourselves, before we could answer, before we could reason...but left us...imagining, even for that moment, that second, in that small slither of unmovable, imaginable, glorious, beautiful space... What if?

T.F. McCray

Lovingly lifted from TCF, Otago, NZ Chapter

T.F. McCray is a lawyer, freelance writer, and married mother of two. She lost her brother Thomas Wesley Higdon Jr. at the age of 38 in 2009, from congestive heart failure.



The Compassionate Friends

Minneapolis Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

c/o St. Joseph Parish
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