

## The Compassionate Friends Timeline: 1968—2003

1968	Reverend Simon Stephens became assistant chaplain at Warwickshire Hospital in Coventry, England.
May 1968	Kenneth Lawley, 11, was struck by a car while riding his bike and was taken to Warwickshire Hospital. While offering comfort to Kenneth's parents, Joe and Iris Lawley, Reverend Stephens mentioned another boy in the same hospital, Billy Henderson, who was dying of an illness.
May 23, 1968	Kenneth Lawley died followed by Billy Henderson a few days later.
May 1968	The Lawleys sent flowers to the Hendersons following Billy's death. At the encouragement of Reverend Stephens, the families met and became friends, as well as a source of support for one another. Reverend Stephens suggested they include other bereaved parents, and the Rattigan family was invited to join.
January 28, 1969	The first meeting of "The Society of Compassionate Friends" was held in Warwickshire Hospital with Reverend Stephens, Betty Rattigan, Joe and Iris Lawley, and Bill and Joan Henderson in attendance.
October 1970	Gabrielle Shamres and her mother, Paula, were involved in an auto/train accident in Florida and 10-year-old "Gabi" was killed.
May 1971	Paula and Arnold Shamres read an article in <i>TIME</i> magazine about the British Society of Compassionate Friends and contacted Reverend Stephens.
November 1971	Reverend Stephens visited with Paula and Arnold in Florida to discuss developing Compassionate Friends groups in the United States.
Spring 1972	Reverend Stephens' book, <i>Death Comes Home</i> , was published.
Fall 1972	The first "branch" of The Compassionate Friends in the U.S. was developed and met in south Florida under the direction of the Paula and Arnold Shamres.
1972-1977	Approximately 40 branches developed throughout the U.S., primarily in Florida and the Midwest.  Reverend Don Balster and his wife, Marian, read <i>Death Comes Home</i> after their son Mark died in 1973. They contacted Reverend Stephens and asked for help with starting a branch in Hinsdale, Illinois.
July 1977	The <i>Phil Donahue</i> program featured Harriet Schiff, author of <i>The Bereaved Parent</i> . Chicago area TCF members were invited to be in the audience. There was overwhelming response to two shows filmed. A few months later, the first national newsletter was printed. Within a year, 126 new branches, now called chapters, were formed.
April 1978	TCF was incorporated in Illinois. The first national conference was held in Hinsdale, Illinois. Bylaws were adopted, a national board of directors was formed, and the first officers were elected.
June 1978	The TCF national office was established in Oak Brook, Illinois, and staffed by volunteers.
July 1978	The <i>Phil Donahue</i> programs with Harriet Schiff were rerun, generating hundreds of calls to the new national office. Once again, interest in developing chapters surged throughout the country.

1980	The first executive director, volunteer Art Peterson, wrote "The Seven Principles of The Compassionate Friends."
1982	Five brochures were printed and a chapter leaders' manual developed.
1984 - 1996	Due to the rapid growth of TCF, the board decided that a full-time paid executive director was needed. Therese Goodrich was hired in January 1984, and served until her retirement in July 1992. Susan Salisbury-Richards was hired in 1992 and remained in the ED position until her resignation in 1995. Diana Cunningham served as interim director from December 1995 to July 1996, when she was named by the board as executive director. The first issue of the <i>Sibling Newsletter</i> was published in the summer of 1990.
July 1996	Karen Snapp was elected as board president – first sibling to hold that office.
December 1996	TCF was awarded a grant of \$100,000 (the largest ever for TCF) from the Project on Death in America to develop a Chapter Leadership Training Program (CLTP).
March 1997	TCF's own Web site was created and launched.
July 1997	The second TCF International Gathering was held in Philadelphia (the first International Gathering was held in England in 1994).
November 1997	A CLTP was presented in Merrillville, Indiana—the first in a series of 14 programs.
December 14, 1997	The first TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting was held.
March 1998	The Strategic Plan was revised and adopted, outlining goals for TCF through 2000.
June 1998	The sibling newsletter, <i>S.T.A.G.E.S.</i> , and the national newsletter were combined into a national magazine, <i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> .
September 1998	Resolution 193 was formally adopted by the United States Senate, designating Sunday, December 13, 1998, as National Children's Memorial Day.
December 11, 1998	President Clinton formally signed the proclamation.
December 13, 1998	The second annual Worldwide Candle Lighting was held. Also, the first National Children's Memorial Day was observed.
January 29, 1999	Date of the 30th anniversary of the founding of TCF in Birmingham, England.
June 11, 2000	TCF Foundation was established.
July 2, 2000	The first TCF memorial "Walk to Remember" was held.
September 2000	Diana Cunningham resigned as executive director. Pat Loder was named interim executive director.
November 2000	The Strategic Plan was revised and adopted outlining goals for TCF through 2003.
March 2001	Pat Loder was named executive director.
May 18 2001	CLTPs were reinstated on a continuing basis by the board.
January 2002	The "Legacy of Love" TCF Foundation campaign was launched.