

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

AUGUST 2007

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall at Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule

Please Mark Your Calendar

Aug 2 **General Sharing & Loss by Suicide**
Sept 6 **General Sharing**
Sept 28-30 - **E. PA Regional Conference**
 (see pages 3 & 4 for information)

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. **The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.**

ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. **Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.** Donations are also accepted at meetings. We are most grateful for your support.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, FRANK GOMEZ
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN RAPOPORT or RHONDA GOMEZ**



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NEW FRIENDS

Marcia Kling, son *CJ* 9/20/82 - 3/13/07

We welcome our newly bereaved friends. We are sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all been in the depths of despair and know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. We hope that you will attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

JULY REFRESHMENTS

Rose Marie & Paul Cote (June mtg.) in memory of their son, *Mark J. Cote* 6/3/1963 - 3/26/1999

Rhonda & Frank Gomez in memory of their son, *Frank Jr.* 9/30/1942 - 4/14/2003

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Ann Rapoport or Rhonda Gomez(484)919-0820**, or you may sign the **refreshment chart** located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

LOVE GIFTS

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

The newsletter will be available by email to those who wish to receive it in this form. You will receive the newsletter earlier if you opt to receive the newsletter by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, and later decide you want to receive it by postal service, you will have the option to switch back to the old method. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email please contact: Frank Gomez fgomez@hybridpoplars.com

**E. PA 2007 Regional Conference
September 28, 29, 30 - Radisson Hotel, King of Prussia, PA**

Each of you should have received a registration brochure form in your June & July 2007 newsletters. If you need an additional brochure, you may contact the Hofmockels (please see address, phone number, and email on page 1).

Regional Conferences are made available in nearby surrounding areas to make it convenient and less expensive than National Conferences, for you to attend. Several of our speakers are well known at TCF National Conferences.

We hope you will take the opportunity to share this weekend with us. It is an indescribable experience. It is a safe haven with bereaved families who have "been there", and know the depth of the pain. You may stay at the hotel (if you identify yourself as a Conference Attendee, you will receive the reduced rate of \$99) or you may commute daily.

There are no strangers, everyone is an instant friend. We have all been stripped of something so precious, all else seems so trivial, there are no social barriers. There is no need to wear a mask to conceal your emotional feelings, we share them with one another.

You will meet some well seasoned bereaved families, who have proven life can be meaningful once more. They have learned to love, laugh, and live again, even though the love and memories of our children and siblings have not diminished. We take our memories with us wherever we go.

Conference Volunteers

We invite you to participate in our conference by being a volunteer. We provide a volunteer monitor in each workshop. Prior to the workshop, the monitor will check that chairs are in order, removing paper or leftover items from previous sessions, providing water for speaker, etc. You may choose a workshop that you have planned to attend. Your first choice of workshop monitoring may not be available, please choose a 2nd and 3rd choice.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. After Death Communication | 9. Grieving for Adult Sibling | 16. Multiple Losses |
| 2. Anger & Guilt | 10. How Children Grieve | 17. Religion & Spirituality |
| 3. Death from Terminal Illness | 11. Humor & Grief | 18. Sudden Death |
| 4. Difficult/Troubled Child | 12. Inside TCF | 19. Suicide |
| 5. Drunk Driving | 13. Is it time for professional help? | 20. Unrecognized Grief
in Fathers & Siblings |
| 6. Finding the Treasures | 14. Long Term Grieving (five years) | 21. What Helps the Most |
| 7. First 2 years of Bereavement | 15. Moving Forward (relations between
bereaved parents & surviving siblings) | |
| 8. Grief is Not an Illness | | |

Volunteers are also needed in other areas such as: hospitality room, distribute programs, set up lunch & banquet centerpieces, strip thorns from roses, boutique, etc., etc. etc. **If you wish to be a volunteer, but not a room monitor, please note this when sending your volunteer form to Jack.**

VOLUNTEER FORM

Count me in! I would like to volunteer to monitor the following workshop:

Name: _____ Workshop # _____ Title: _____
 Address: _____ Workshop # _____ Title: _____
 Telephone: _____ Workshop # _____ Title: _____

**Please complete the form and mail to:
Jack & Dee Heil
121 Washington Drive
Brigantine, NJ 08203**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP
IT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.**

REGIONAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS**PAT LODER**

Pat is the executive director of The Compassionate Friends. She and her husband, Wayne, joined TCF in 1991 following the deaths of their only children, Stephanie and Stephen, in an auto accident. They started the Lakes Area Chapter in Commerce Township, Michigan in 1993 and have been chapter leaders and newsletter editors. Pat is also a bereaved sibling, her brother, Rick, died from cancer in 1990. In 1995 Pat and Wayne became editors of the national TCF publications, We Need Not Walk Alone and STAGES, which they combined into a magazine in 1998. Pat has served as editor of Friends, Caring & Sharing, and was a regional coordinator for the state of Michigan. In 1999 she became development director for TCF. While in that position she organized the "Walk to Remember" at the Chicago 2000 TCF national conference. Pat was named interim executive director in September 2000 and permanent executive director in March 2001. In addition to her regular column in We Need Not Walk Alone, Pat is a contributing writer for Grief Digest magazine.

FRED MOUNTJOY

Reasons for involvement in TCF:

The deaths of their daughters brought his wife, Marilyn, and he into TCF. Their twin daughters, Barlyn and Maralin, died shortly after their birth in 1961. Their third daughter, Marian, died in 1996 at the age of thirty-three. There was no TCF in 1961, they were told to "just get over it, you are young, have more children." They listened, suppressing their grief, although it surfaced in various ways. Marian was born in 1962 with inoperable congenital cardiac abnormalities. The prognosis was that she would not live six months. She lived for an additional thirty-three years. A testament to her enthusiasm for life. Shortly after her death they attended their local TCF meeting. They have been involved, now, for ten years. Currently, they are co-facilitators of their group.

HAZEL WOODWARD, LPC -

Hazel Woodward is a long-time member of The Compassionate Friends. Her brother, Patrick Woodward, was killed in 1985 in the Rick Nelson airplane crash. In 1987, her 18 year old daughter, Brooks Mayhall, was killed in an automobile accident. Brooks was 5 months pregnant with a little girl, who died within her mother. Hazel participated in the Mobile, Alabama Chapter of TCF, as Chapter Leader and a member of the Steering Committee for over 10 years. She is a former member of the National Board of Directors of TCF, serving for 6 years. She was a regular provider of in-services, workshops and seminars in the Mobile area representing TCF. Hazel has participated in chapter sibling development in a number of TCF chapters in the United States. She has been a workshop presenter for 7 national conferences, focusing on sibling losses. She was instrumental in highlighting the need of adult siblings to have a voice in TCF activities, and was one of the first to present a workshop focusing on adult sibling loss. Hazel is now living in the Birmingham, Alabama area, where she is a licensed professional counselor for Bradford Health Services and has a busy private practice. She has a BS in psychology, MS in Counseling, and a certificate in Thanatology

Rev. Dr. RICHARD GILBERT

The Reverend Richard B. Gilbert, Ph.D., BCC, CT is familiar to many in the TCF/Philadelphia area. A Board Certified Chaplain, Certified Chaplain, and Anglican priest, he has been working with bereaved parents and siblings in various capacities since the 1980s, including several national TCF conferences and an international conference in Birmingham, England. He is extensively published, and gives care to those struggling with the spiritual side of loss. As a chaplain he has dealt with far too many deaths of infants, children and young adults. He, too, is a bereaved parent (miscarriage).

DR. YVONNE KAYE

Dr. Yvonne Kaye is an international speaker with subjects ranging from Spirit Soaring, Laughter Roaring, to post traumatic stress disorder and bereavement, specializing in the death of children. She has been a trainer for Hospice and was known to Dame Cicely Saunders, living in South London close to St. Christopher's. She is a certified Thanatologist, veteran radio talk show host, author, columnist and Interfaith Minister, believing in the power of the human spirit. Involved with long term illness and crises, Dr. Kaye is a strong advocate of humour and spirituality. She has been a supportive friend of The Compassionate Friends since 1982. She uses her own life experiences as a basis of her work and is especially effective with women who want to grow and change. She is a Spiritual Coach and her philosophy is "Laughter is the miracle healer". Dr. Kaye recently received the prestigious Matty Muir Award 2005 for work with victims of crime. She is a consultant to the Penn Foundation Recovery Center, Sellersville Pa.

ELAINE E. STILLWELL, M.A., M.S.

Fifteen months after the deaths of her two oldest children, 21 year old Denis and 19 year old Peggy, who died four days apart from an automobile accident in 1986, Elaine and her husband Joe founded The Compassionate Friends of Rockville Centre, NY. The chapter will celebrate its 20th birthday in October and averages 70+ at monthly meetings. In the '90's, Elaine and Joe served as New York's Regional Coordinators. They continue as TCF Chapter Leaders and Elaine is also Editor of their monthly newsletter. She is author of The Death of a Child: Reflections for Grieving Parents and two crafts books for grieving children: Sweet Memories and A Forever Angel, in addition to being a columnist for Grief Digest and Bereavement Coordinator for the Diocese of Rockville Centre helping 134 parishes reach out to the bereaved.

OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This Month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children:

THE PATH

My world lay shattered around me. Gone were the flowers and the sun. The path ahead looked dark and threatening. I heard a voice saying, "You have to travel this path alone."

"I don't want to go down that path. I can't." I protested. "I liked the old path."

"The choice is yours," said the voice, "but you may never go back to the old path. You may stay here at the crossroads where anger and pain will keep you company and wither your spirit. Or, you may runoff into the surrounding woods and pretend you are going somewhere, but you will become disoriented and lost. The only peace is to be found at the end of the path ahead."

"If you have the courage to set forth upon the new path and keep struggling through the storms, you will discover depths in yourself that you never knew existed. If you reach out you will find those who have already traveled this difficult way and are there to support and guide you. Though it seems impossible now, your path will become beautiful again, as will your spirit. You will emerge from the desolation a stronger, wiser, and more compassionate person. Then you too can turn and extend your hand to those who are still on the way."

I made a choice. I picked up the remains of my life -- my aching heart and wounded spirit, my broken dreams and disbelief -- and wrapped them carefully in my blanket of grief. Holding them closely to me, I walked steadfastly ahead into the storm with faith in the promise of peace on the other side.

Sharron Cordaro, Riverside, CA

SHARED THOUGHTS ON HEALING, BUT NEVER FORGETTING

We lost our son, Doug, 25 years ago. I did not run away from anything. I met it all head-on, but all the while, feeling the intensity of the pain would last a lifetime. **I did my grief work**, I shared my grief with most anyone who wanted to listen. (probably with some who did not want to listen) After a while, I noticed I did not have the need to speak of my grief, and could find healing in listening to, and trying to salve other's pain. This played a big role in my becoming functional again. For the most part, my life is enjoyable and filled with anticipation and looking for a tomorrow.

The one thing I cannot get past is feeling the pain for the newly bereaved. Because I have "been there" their pain becomes my pain. A few years ago, our steering committee decided it would be beneficial for those attending a Compassionate Friends meeting for the first time, to meet separately. Having previously talked to most of these people by phone, gave me some insight on their background, therefore I seemed the logical one to facilitate this group.

This was a very good experience for me. It reiterated that we heal, but we don't forget. Perhaps the remembering is what gives us compassion and the desire to reach out to those hurting so badly. Much of the devastation of our loss is the same for all of us, the deep depression, anger, guilt, no interest in life around us, "going over the edge", worry about losing another, crying, can't cry, marital deterioration, unable to fulfill obligations with our family and work situations. I so want to make them better **now**, teach them to love again (particularly themselves), restore their faith in their supreme being, help them sort grief from true marital problems, and tell them we have all felt like we were going over the edge (but didn't).

It seems so little to offer, "your feelings are normal, you will get better, and become functional again". If the newly bereaved could **truly believe** these words, then I guess that is a **lot** to offer. But I feel most of them are saying "you don't know how deep I have fallen in the pit" and this transition could never happen to me. (This was my reaction in the early stages) Believe me, we know where the bottom is, we've been there. We can learn to smile again; we can even learn to live again, once we have let go of some of the pain. Be patient, this doesn't happen soon. If it has not been long enough for you to see progress, look at those at The Compassionate Friends meetings, who have moved ahead in their grief. They didn't love any less, they have not forgotten how intense your pain can be, and they are just in a different place in their grief. Many have stayed to help you through your loss; their very presence says its possible to survive.

They are healing, but never forgetting.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge, PA

SIBLINGS

BROTHER

Brother, if only for an instant
I can catch you in my own eyes
And in my own smile.

For an instant I feel the thickness of my hair
and wonder if it isn't yours.

Study the curve of my ear lobe and
remember childhood, whisper games
we would play in church.

Brother, if only for an instant
I see you in me, I know you live on.

Cynthia Dowd, TCF sibling
Susquehana Valley Chapter, Sunbury, PA

TO MY BROTHERS

On the anniversary of their deaths.
I loved them so.

Have you ever lost two brothers?
To an auto accident?
It can really make you crazy
Wondering why and where they went!

They had smiles bright as sunshine.
Hugs as warm as summer rain.
And they loved until their hearts would burst.
And then they'd love again.

In the sunrise every morning
I am sure that I do see
My warm and loving brothers
Reaching out and touching me.

With each gentle breeze of Springtime
Comes a message from above
They were here and gave me laughter
And filled my heart with love.

If I could have but one wish
The secret wish would be
That everyone could know the love
My brothers gave to me!

Kathy Gunthrie, TCF, Cape May, NJ

FRIENDSHIP IS A COMFORTING SORT OF THING

The end of the year holidays are fast approaching, which also signifies another anniversary of the death of my brother Rob of leukemia. The reality of his death still catches me off guard at the most unexpected moments. Sometimes I am certain most of my grief is behind me, yet I am not quite sure the reality of Rob's death has hit me. It's still a mystery to me how I get through each day. My parents have always been a strong source of support for me, but they also have their own grieving to do. Therefore, I find myself relying on my friends for strength. It's true they don't always have the right things to say. I've learned not to expect that. They have their own way of handling my grieving.

I have friends who are always willing to listen even though they acknowledge only a vague understanding of my loss. Certain friends can't talk about my brother, but they never neglect to call me and check up on me. Some of my friends are better at jokes than sympathetic gestures. Yes, they admit the jokes aren't always appropriate to my mood, but they try. All of my friends are aware that Rob's death has a lasting effect on my life. They constantly remind me how much life still has to offer.

My friends are far from perfect. When they talk about their siblings, they don't seem to notice how my mood changes. Sometimes it makes me angry that they can be so insensitive. It always hurts even though I know they need to share these things with me.

I love my friends, yet I envy them. They support me, but they also remind me that life goes on. I also have a responsibility to give them back the support they give me. My grief doesn't totally excuse me from this. I have realized how important my friends are to me since the death of my brother. I need to let them be a part of my grieving because they all have a significant part in my healing process.

Julann Pontician, TCF Tri-Co., Pottstown, PA

SYMPATHY

Neither poetry nor prose can ease the pain of one's bereavement, or justify the loss, but time and the tides of life lighten every burden and soothe every heart.

Geri Taran

ANY CHILD'S DEATH DIMINISHES ME

What difference does it make whether a child is stillborn or dies after some years of life?

She spoke of the lack of memories because her child was stillborn.

He commented on the deep pain brought by those very memories which remind one of what is lost!

When it comes to a child's death, does the type of death matter? Is a murder worse than an accident? Suicide worse than chronic illness? Teenage worse than the older adult? Still born worse than teenage?

I've tried to be thankful that Jeanie wasn't murdered. That she did not commit suicide. That she and those dear boys did not linger, comatose. Or die from prolonged illness. I could not find thankfulness though I have sought diligently for it within my deepest being!

The death of a child, whatever the age or circumstances, brings its own guilt and anger. Its own despair and questioning. Any child's death diminishes the parents who loved that child. And, for those bereaved parents, that death is surely the worst. Their grief the most severe!

Robert F. Gloor

TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

MY PRECIOUS JOEY

I wish I could turn back the hands of time
And have you here with me again.
I wish I could hug you and feel your embrace
Hear your voice and see your face.
Feel that happiness that I once knew
When I walked this earth with you.

I wish I could turn back the hands of time,
So you could be here with me again.
So I could know how it feels to live again
In a world with joy instead of pain.
A pain that consumes me night and day,
A constant companion that won't go away.

But, my dear son I know time does not stand still,
I know I can't turn back time,
But, I do know we'll be together again
In a place where we never will part,
Then all of my sorrows will turn to joy,
And peace will mend my broken heart.

In memory of our beloved son, Joseph Hricik, Jr. on
his 3rd anniversary March 2, 1999 – from his mom
and dad, *Joe & Betty Hricik*, Pgh, PA

OPENNESS

I cannot survive my grief with a closed mind, a closed heart, a closed mouth, or a closed fist. I must open my ears, my thoughts, my feelings of all kinds, and speak and listen to the sharing and caring of compassionate friends, and to open my arms to comfort and hug the grieving and newly bereaved. For it is impossible to heal and help yourself to survive the death of a child if you cannot receive...

For a clenched fist is not able to give or receive...

Ed Kuzela

Atlanta, GA TCF

In remembering our children,
In sharing with each other...
We ease our pain, we share each step,
We help smooth the road,
And we serve as witnesses to the fact that
We can make it beyond grief
As we support each other.

Roy Peterson TCF – Lexington, KY

OLDER GRIEF IS GENTLER.

It's about sudden tears swept in by a strand
of music.
It's about haunting echoes of first pain,
at anniversaries.
It's about feeling his presence for an
instant one day while I'm dusting his room.
It's about early pictures
that invite me to fold him in my arms again.
It's about memories blown in
on wisps of wood smoke and sea scent.
Older grief is about aching in gentler
ways, rarer longing, less engulfing fire.
Older grief is about searing pain wrought
into tenderness.

Linda Zelenka -
TCF Orange Park - Jacksonville, FL

WILL YOU ALWAYS BE SIXTEEN, MY SON?

Will you always be sixteen, my son?
We remembered your 17th birthday at your grave.
Should I now begin to search for you
in young faces aging past sixteen?

Will you always be sixteen, my son?
As I watch your brother approaching manhood.
Your beloved brother, just 26 months older
Will you be sixteen, as he turns 20?

I can trace your years and growth in pictures
You and your brother,
your height just inches apart.
But the pictures and memories of you
with your brother have stopped
Will you always be sixteen, my son?

Elaine Madden
December 1995

You can not do a kindness too soon,
because you will never know
how soon it will be too late.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

AFTER THE FIRST YEAR

After the first year ...
The pain changes from a crushing weight
To a wickedly cutting edge.
Time speeds up from grinding plodding
To a more normal routine
and sometimes you can forget (for a moment)
That your whole life was destroyed
Just last year.

After the first year ...
You start to remember the good times
And you can tell a funny story about your child
And save the crying for later,
But sometimes it seems like
You're the only one left who mourns.
"What's the matter with you, anyway?"
"It's been a whole year."

After the first year ...
Your Child seems a little closer and yet so far away
Miracle of miracles, you haven't forgotten
How he walks, his voice, the shape of his head
Or the solid warmth of his fingers
curving around yours
Those memories ambush you
At many unlikely moments and tear you apart.

After the first year ...
Your heart begins to thaw,
You remember that you
Once loved your surviving children
And you love them again.
You remember that life used to hold joy,
And you rediscover some small enjoyment
in living.

After the first year ...
You pick up your burdens and go on.
Amazingly you have survived a blow
More painful than anything you ever imagined.
Even though you wish you could have died too,
It slowly dawns on you that you must still live
Because after the first year comes the second year.

Liz Ford - TCF Madison, WI

