

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

December 2009—January 2010

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

- Dec 3** General Sharing
Collection of Gifts for First Step (see page 3)
- Dec 13** World Wide Candle Lighting Service
(see page 3)
- Jan 7** General Sharing & Death by Suicide

PLEASE NOTE: THIS PUBLICATION OF THE VALLEY FORGE NEWSLETTER IS COMBINED WITH JAN 2010.

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.**

**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 MURRAY or RHONDA GOMEZ**



Valley Forge Chapter

Chapter Co-Leader

Ann Murray
304 N. Essex Ave.
Narberth, PA 19072
email: ann@tcfvalleyforge.org
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone

Chapter Co-Leader

Rhonda Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone
email: sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org

Database Record Keeper

Diana Clark
742 Berwyn Ave.
Berwyn, PA 19312
(610) 656-2437
email: diana.clark707@Gmail.com

Webmaster

Frank Gomez
www.tcfvalleyforge.org

Newsletter Editors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel
340 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(610)337-1907
email: kenhofmockel@comcast.net

E.PA Regional Coordinators

Janet & Dave Keller
(747) 292-6046
email: jd292comcast.net

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free: (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org
email: national.office@
compassionatefriends.org

Barbara Jacobs for all the children

Ben Breskman for my son *Brian's* birthday December 11th

Marilyn Toole for my son *Ted Toole's* birthday November 3rd

Sandi Kensicki for my sister *Rose's* birthday November 3rd

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

Jean Burns, in loving memory of my son *Tim Burns*

Judy & William Cosgrove, in loving memory of our son *Michael Cosgrove*

Helen Deery, in loving memory of my son *Ronald J. Deery, Jr.* whose birthday is Dec 20

Jo Ann Gatlin, in loving memory of my daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* whose birthday is Jan 24

Barbara & Frank Hultslander, in loving memory of our daughter *Kate Hultslander Loughery*

Jan & Dan Jackson, in loving memory of our son *John Jackson*

Gwen & Dennis Kearns, in loving memory of our son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.*

Loretta Kline, in loving memory of my son *Keith Edward Kline*

Susan & Albert Koenig , in loving memory of our daughter *Emily*

Willard & Patricia McLain, in loving memory of our son *Gary J. McLain*. A peaceful holiday season for all the Angels' families.

Loretta & Eric Rudolph, in loving memory of our son *Joseph Rudolph*

Patricia & Bertram Snead, in loving memory of our son *James Christopher Snead*

Jen & Alex Soutos, in loving memory of our daughter *Alexi* whose birthday was Nov 22

Priscilla Thoroughgood, in loving memory of my daughter *Kendra Enochs* whose birthday is Dec 5

Esperanza & Libardo Toro, in loving memory of our daughter *Marie Eugenia Toro* whose birthday was Nov 3.

Barbara Tuller, in loving memory of my son *Charles Tuller*

Susan & Albert Koenig, Book donation: "The Tallest Leprechaun, A tall tale of terrible teasing" written by *Emily Grace Koenig* who died at the age of 11.

Connie & Richard Nolan, Book donation "The Fall of Freddie the Leaf", in loving memory of our son *Christopher Nolan*

United Way of Central & NE Connecticut

Acme Rebate Program

Thanks to all those who have been supporting this program.

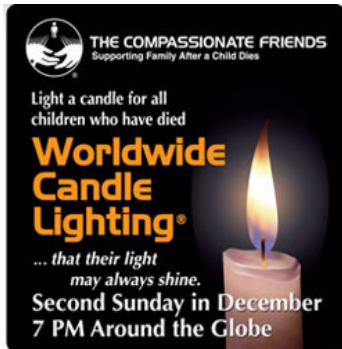
Please forward register receipts to Marie & Ken Hofmockel (see address on page 1).

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

The newsletter is 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@hybridoplars.com

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS WORLD WIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH - DEC 13TH



TCF Candle Lighting Services are held annually the second Sunday in December. The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a remembrance service on December 13th at 2 PM, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (same Church our monthly sharing secessions are held). We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7PM.

We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to everyone, including those who do not drive at night. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.

SPEAKER: Dr. Yvonne Kaye

Dr. Yvonne Kaye is an international speaker with a wide range of subjects, including post traumatic stress disorder and bereavement, specializing in the death of children. 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 uses her own life experiences as a basis for her work. She is a Spiritual Coach and her philosophy is "Laughter is the miracle healer". Dr. Kaye received the prestigious Matty Muir Award 2005 for work with victims of crime.

Dr. Yvonne Kaye has given much support for many years to The Compassionate Friends. She has been a speaker on numerous subjects at many varied occasions of TCF Chapters in our area. Dr. Kaye has often been a keynote speaker at Regional, National and International Conference of TCF

www.yvonnekaye.com - irrevrev@comcast.net - 215-393-5464

GIFTS FOR FIRST STEP

First Step is a program of Chester County for under privileged/handicapped children. For many years our Chapter has collected gifts for them. We will do so again this year, you may bring your gifts to our December 3rd monthly meeting, or at the Remembrance Service on December 13th. The children are between the ages of 2 and 6. Both clothing and toys are welcome gifts. Please do not wrap gifts. It is very rewarding to remember your child, by showing love to these children. You may sign it, "from your friend", or your child or sibling's name. This may be the only gift the child will receive. We appreciate your participation in this worthy cause.

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: **Additions or corrections to this list should be given to the editors, Marie & Ken Hofmockel.**

**We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter.
We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.**

DECEMBER Birthdays

Chris Aiello, brother *Louis* 12/24
Tai & Karen Bahn, daughter *Michelle Bahn* 12/15
Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* 12/17
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* 12/20
Ben Breskman, son *Brian* 12/11
Debbie & Stephen Carr, daughter *Dana Carr* 12/14
Jennifer Catanese, son *Andrew* 12/7
Libby Cavallaro, sister *Theresa* 12/29
Benjamin E. Cohen, daughter *Donna Lynne Cohen* 12/9
Anita Conway, son *Daniel* 12/9
Jean & Bill Cotter, son *Patrick Cotter* 12/20
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* 12/23
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *Kenneth* 12/15
Robert Dilbeck, son *Daniel Dilbeck* 12/20
Maura & Chuck Dombroski, son *Paul Dombroski* 12/2
Joseph & Patsy Dooley, son *Peter J. Dooley* 12/22
Ed & Sue Duffy, son *Peter* 12/12
June & Tsuneo Fujita, daughter *Sharon Kimi Fujita* 12/29
Sherry Goldberg, son *Neal* 12/14
Susan Goldberg, brother *Neal* 12/14
Sofie & Lige Grahn Jr, son *Richard Grahn* 12/7
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* 12/28
Christine Hertzog, son *Nicholas* 12/13
Joan Kellett, son *Daniel Thomas Kellett* 12/7
Wendy Kuhn, brother *David* 12/19
Teresa & Bill Lattanze, daughter *Jodi Noell Lattanze* 12/19
Lorice McDonald, son *Oral* 12/11
Pat Miller, son *Nathan* 12/2
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* 12/31
Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* 12/2
George W. Nase, son *Brian D. Nase* 12/16
Betty Jane Peters- Neilson, son *Martin A Peters* 12/8
Bonnie Nimerfroh, son *David* 12/19
Joseph O'Neil, daughter *Beverley A. Schlotterer* 12/23
Pamela Reese, daughter *Laura Ann Peskoff* 12/20

DECEMBER Birthdays continued

Maureen & David Rich, daughter *Mallory Kirby Rich* 12/4
Morris Romano, daughter *Diane Romano Donovan* 12/16
Thelma Rosen, brother *David Beeler* 12/24
Eileen Smith, son *Craig* 12/17
John & Rose Stanley, daughter *Susan Stanley* 12/4
Ronda Stansbery, daughter *Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman* 12/22
Edward & Mary Stimson, son *Keith Stimson* 12/29
Priscilla Thoroughgood, daughter *Kendra Enochs* 12/5
Judy & Bert Tomarelli, son *Daniel Robert Tomarelli* 12/19
Marie Torrey, sister *Trudy* 12/12
Emma Valenteen, daughter *Marianne Valenteen* 12/14
Jackie Ward, grandson *Anthony* 12/1
Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan* 12/28

DECEMBER Anniversaries

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* - 12/21
Carole & Henry Bailey, son *Matthew J. Bailey* - 12/21
Richard & Jo Bewley, son *Kevin Bewley* - 12/29
Lisa Bledy, sister *Danielle Bledy* - 12/4
Cecile Buonocore, son *John Buonocore, III* - 12/27
Catherine Chan, son *Chanlan Lee* - 12/19
Irene Collins, son *Artie Zeigler* - 12/24
Martin & Mary Conway, son *Neal* - 12/10
Nina Coppolella, daughter *Nina Marie Tumolo* - 12/11
Carole and Kevin Creighton, son *Ryan Kent Creighton* - 12/6
Reno & Bonnie Crescimone, son *Jonathan* - 12/21
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* - 12/19
Bob & Madeline Deery, brother *Ronald J. Deery* - 12/20
Helen Deery, son *Ronald J. Deery, Jr.* - 12/20
Susan Dehlinger, daughter *Amy M Dehlinger* - 12/7
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *Kenneth (Kenny)* - 12/5
Barbara Frederick, son *Michael J. Frederick* - 12/14
John Gething, son *Adam Gething* - 12/7
Beverly & Marty Halvorsen, Jr., son *Erik M. Halvorsen* - 12/24
Michelle Hillstrom, daughter *Jen* - 12/20
Anthony & Carol Iacobucci, son *Anthony Iacobucci* - 12/13
Enid M. Irizarry, daughter *Lisette M. Molina* - 12/25
Dorothy & Carl Johnson-Speight, daughter *Carlana Speight* - 12/13
Millie Jones, grandson *Shawn Dian* - 12/23
Russell L. Kinder, daughter *Susanna B. Kinder* - 12/27
Joan Kingslake, daughter *Ann Kingslake Woods* - 12/31

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Nancy Althouse, daughter *Donna Lee Althouse* 1/27
Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* 1/27
George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley* 1/21
Mr. & Mrs. Blosky, son *Kevin* 1/28
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* 1/14
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Daniel J. Cornely* 1/28
Ron & Laia Dans, son *Peter Cannon* 1/15
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* 1/21
Cynthia & Robert Dilorenzo, son *Scott* 1/19
Abigail Figueroa, son *Jose C Figueroa* 1/2
Sharon Hirst, son *Tom* 1/19
Barbara Jacobs, daughter *Pamela Faye* 1/3
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* 1/18
Arlene and Bob Krauss, son *Fred* 1/7
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew* 1/29
John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Kaitlyn Logue* 1/19
Kathleen & Hugh Martin, Jr., son *Colin John "C.J." Martin* 1/12
Linda Massey, son *Gene* 1/19/1981
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* 1/23
Gerald & Margaret Milice, son *Gerald Milice* 1/28
Christine Miraglia, son *Ralph Miraglia* 1/26
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael* 1/27
Carleen Panaccio, son *Bret* 1/27
Barbara Pearl, son *Jason Seth Pearl* 1/14
Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison* 1/3
Robert Pickle, daughter *Cinthia Pickle* 1/10
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam* 1/27
Michelle Pollart, brother *Mark Andrew Steffler* 1/30
Mary Jane Pollart, son *Mark Andrew Steffler* 1/30
Ann Gill Price, son *Douglas Gill* 1/9
Christine and Richard Purkiss, son *Adam Clark* 1/15
Steve & Joann Reynolds, son *Chris* 1/10
Elise Rice, husband *James W. Rice, Sr.* 1/27
Margaret & Robert Rooney, daughter *Sharon Rooney* 1/30
Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* 1/31
Marie Scartozzi, granddaughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* 1/6
Lynn & Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* 1/6
Barbara Smisko, daughter *Linda* 1/19/1968 - 6/30/2008
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* 1/24
Juan & Casey Terrero, son *Jalen* 1/29
Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas* 1/21

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS (continued)

Joanne Thorpe, grandchild *Zachary* 1/18
Patricia Trippley, son *William* 1/18
Weldon & Marie Tyson, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson* 1/22
Don & Natalie Wallace, son *Zachary George* 1/18
Eden & Barbara Warren, daughter *Karen M. Moncuso* 1/17
Carolyn Ways, son *Robert Goodman* 1/28
Shirley Weir, daughter *Susan Weir-Grays* 1/22
Robin Zelenak, brother *Ronny Auch* 1/10
brother *Ryan Auch* 1/4

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25
Barbara Brooks, son *Jeb* - 1/31
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* - 11/22
Linda & Joe Carty, brother *Joe Clerico* - 1/5
Patricia & Ben Clerico, son *Joseph Clerico* - 1/5
Irene & Abbe Cohen, nephew *Scott Alan Rosenthal* - 1/3
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* - 1/4
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David* - 1/11
Helen Dietrich, son *Joseph Dougherty* - 1/1
Susan Dillman, daughter *Heather Lynne Dillman* - 1/19
Mary Dion, daughter *Theresa* - 1/26
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* - 1/20
Donna & Stanley Edwards, son *Stanley Austin Edwards* - 1/9
Carol & John Ellis, son *Daniel M. "Doodles" Ellis* - 1/7
Mary Ann Erdek, nephew *Joseph Clerico* - 1/5
Robert & Kathy Gelinas, son *Bobby Gelinas* - 1/21
Sofie & Lige Grahn Jr, son *Richard Grahn* - 1/14
Robert & Kathleen Grossi, son *James Michael Grossi* - 1/28
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Hall* - 1/25
George & Kay Hartman, son *Thomas R Hartman* - 1/27
Jeanne R Helmers, sister *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* - 1/9
Tammy & Allen Howard, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard* - 1/19
Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* - 1/1
Kathleen & John Leeper, son *Shaun Michael Leeper* - 1/15
Joan Lippre, son *John* - 1/26
Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* - 1/6
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* - 1/18
Anna E Marchese, son *Matthew Paul Marchese* - 1/29
Kathy Mason, son *Avery Mason* - 1/8

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES (continued)

Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* - 1/4
Diane Mazzagatti, son *John Pirocchi, Jr.* - 1/30
Michael & Maria McFadden, daughter *Rachel McFadden* - 1/14
Linda & Jim McGrath, son *Paul Drew McGrath* - 1/22
Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* - 1/31
Mark & Kathryn McNally, daughter *Beth Ann McNally* - 1/11
Mary C. Monahan, grandson *Shaun Michael Leeper* - 1/15
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy* - 1/11
Betty Jane Peters- Neilson, son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* - 1/21
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan* - 1/3
Jim & Bobbi O'Brien, daughter *Beth Hubbard* - 1/26
Peggy O'Brien, son *Rick O'Brien* - 1/9
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* - 1/1
Carleen Panaccio, son *Bret* - 1/4
Thomas & Demetra Patukas, son *George Thomas Patukas* - 1/4
Rosemary Peterson, son *Donald R. Peterson* - 1/25
Robert & Jean Phillips, son *Robert Phillips* - 1/3
Lyla T. Poulson, brother *Joe* - 1/18
Joe & Marti Purifico, son *Jeffrey* - 1/18
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* - 1/12
Roy Redman, daughter *Carol* - 1/9
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, father (Bubbles) *Albert Volpe* - 1/18
Carol Robinson, son *Jim Kearney* - 1/17
Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie* - 1/7
Bernice Scheinfield, son *Richard Scheinfield* - 1/26
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Scott Alan Rosenthal* - 1/3
Carroll & Christine Siquett, daughter *Tammy Marie Siquett* - 1/23
Michael P. Smith, son *Michael* - 1/3
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* - 1/6
Ray & Lorraine Spear, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear* - 1/30
Shuchi & Peter Stanger, sister *Urvi Thanawala* - 1/9
Thomas & Sara Thiermann, daughter *Heather Bruce Thiermann* - 1/23
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* - 1/1
Joanne Thorpe, grandchild *Zachary* - 1/21
Doris Tierney, son *Tom Tierney* - 1/7
Cara Tripodi, brother *Christopher Tripodi* - 1/21
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* - 1/14
Pat Villante, daughter *Patty* - 1/30
Don & Natalie Wallace, son *Zachary George* - 1/21
Bethany & Alvin Walton, brother/son *A.J.* - 1/27
Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen* - 1/6

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

As we approach the holidays, it is normal for our fears to become magnified. The holidays put an extra burden on us physically, financially, and emotionally, this can be an overwhelming time. Sometimes friends and family forget the stress and depression we are coping with.

It is unfair to expect the non-bereaved to understand what we are experiencing, and to know the length of time it takes to work through our grief. Before our loss, we could not fathom the depth of despair it takes to get through our anguish. This may be a good time to be honest, and tell family and friends, "we are both physically, and emotionally drained, we plan to participate in the holidays as much as we are capable. But, that we do need understanding, and to be excused from painful gatherings, so we can grieve, remember our child or sibling and heal through doing these things." When responding to invitations, it is helpful to be very open (but kind), and ask them to not pressure us to do more than we are capable.

Part of our celebration, is to reminisce the beautiful time our family was all-intact, enjoying just being together. Now we face these same holidays knowing the circle will never again be complete, the intensity of it all makes us afraid. We are aware of the shattered dreams, and how our future will always remain somewhat fragmented. It is very difficult for newly bereaved to accept that it will get any better. But, those of us, who have more time in our bereavement, know the pain will soften, but special occasions will always tug at our emotional stability. We have also learned that those occasional tears are OK, and now that we are much stronger, we can tolerate the down times, for we have much more resilience.

Frequently, we try to take on more than we can handle. It is important to not over burden ourselves, for that increases our fatigue, and lowers our self-esteem when we can't fulfill our commitment. You may want to re-evaluate your traditions, and decide which ones are really important to you, and are they worth keeping.

For those of us who have been able to maintain our relationship with our Supreme Being, find it helpful to concentrate on our spirituality, rather than the commercialism of the holidays. It often helps to do something to commemorate our children, or sibling - a remembrance service, light a candle, buy an ornament, write notes to our loved one, visit the grave, only you and your immediate family can decide what will get you through the holidays. It often helps to set aside some special time for our grief, to deal with our feelings, and express our love for our child or sibling in private.

Remember, getting through the holidays will help us take one more step in our healing process. It is unfortunate that we have to experience this pain to grow, and regain control of our life. Each of these hurdles helps to strengthen us, to get us through today, and into tomorrow, where we may find hope and peace.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

**We wish all of you a very meaningful Holiday,
May love be what you remember the most.**

REMINISCING

I thought about you today
 As I bade farewell for school.
 I thought about you today
 When I heard a certain song.
 I thought about you today
 As the teacher passed the test.
 I thought about you today
 When the kids jumped in the leaves.
 I thought about you today
 As a stranger passed my way.
 I thought about you today
 When I got drenched in the rain.
 I thought about you today
 As I sat in church and prayed.
 I thought about you today
 When I embraced an old friend.
 I thought about you today
 As the day turned into night.
 I will think of you again
 When I close my eyes and dream.

Lori Phillips

TCF, Scranton, PA

TO JAMES MY LITTLE BROTHER

Life itself, holds many special things;
 One of which was you.
 I tried to understand your ways,
 And reasons for what you would do.
 Sometimes I would take you aside,
 And hold you by the hand;
 Not trying to embarrass you,
 But to help you become a man.
 From skateboarding and skiing
 And teaching you how to dance,
 To sitting down and chatting
 About school, girls and romance.

You tried to learn the right way
 And not to do things wrong;
 But whether or not you did it right
 I knew you'd get along.
 I'll love you always so very deep
 And now that things are done,
 I'll try not to look on it
 As losing a brother
 But as God gaining a son.

I love you, Christopher

Lois English, Canoga Park CA

YESTERDAY/TODAY

Yesterday I was angry
 At you, at God, at me, at everyone.
 Yesterday my heart was filled with grief,
 Sadness, emptiness, confusion, denial.
 Yesterday I broke down, gave up on life, me
 Today I have a new understanding.
 A stronger faith,
 A stronger heart,
 A stronger soul.
 Today I still miss you, need you, love you.
 Today I smiled, laughed, and loved.
 Yesterday my soul almost died.
 Today your soul saved mine.

Tracey Gadbois, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Have you ever kept pains so deep inside,
 that you thought it was gone,
 thought it had died,
 'til one day you find the pain you've
 been keeping has not really died –
 it only was sleeping,
 and when it awakens,
 you find that the pain hurts in a way
 you cannot explain?

It still makes you weep and cry tears
 like a flood, but this time it's
 different and almost feels good.

Author Unknown

BINKY'S MISSING YEARS

It has been thirty-four years since my daughter went to heaven.
My heart is empty without her on this earth.
The things we both missed out on in life are the missing years of Binky.

I never got to see Binky go to school nor attend her prom night.
Only God knows what kind of man he would have been, who took my daughter to her prom.
It would have been nice to see Binky get married and say her vows to him.
It would have been nice to have been a grandmother, even if they weren't healthy.

I guess there was a reason why God took my Binky away from me.
I know that it says in the Bible that God lends us the children we have.

I know that I miss my daughter Binky very much and she probably misses me too.
Binky will always be in my heart and the eye of my delight.
I know God is taking care of Binky and protecting her from all evil.
I know when I get to heaven I won't have to miss Binky anymore.

Binky

Sunrise: April 29, 1975
Sunset: November 4, 1975

Linda Weaver, TCF—Valley Forge

MY SON THAT I AM HEARTBROKEN FOR

Today is my son Damon's birthday, November 18, 1980.
He died on March 18, 1999.
Both of these days really get me very emotional.
It's like I don't know if I will be able to get through the day without seeing my child.
For this is what happens to me.

I didn't get to say goodbye to my child.
I just wonder to myself and to God why he put us through all of this suffering for those that we loved.

My heart is so heartbroken for the love that I had and it really hurts.
Damon, you are the apple of my eye and I will never forget
the memories that we both had together.
Oh God, maybe one of these days I will not be in so much emotional pain like I am right now.
Please God help me through this grief that I am going through.
My son Damon, I am so heartbroken for you.

God Bless my children that I have passed onto you so that you may take care of them forever.

Damon

Sunrise: November 21, 1980
Sunset: March 18, 1999

Linda Weaver, TCF—Valley Forge

HELP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Holidays are often difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved. Rather than times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness.

LOVE DOES NOT END WITH DEATH

Since love does not end with death, holidays may result in a renewed sense of personal grief – a feeling of loss unlike that experienced in the routine of daily living. Society encourages you to join in the holiday spirit, but all around you the sounds, sights and smells trigger memories of the one you love who has died.

No simple guidelines exist that will take away the hurt you are feeling. We hope, however, the following suggestions will help you better cope with your grief during this joyful, yet painful, time of the year. As you read through this, remember that by being tolerant and compassionate with yourself, you will continue to heal in your personal grief experience.

TALK ABOUT YOUR GRIEF

During the holiday season, don't be afraid to express your feelings of grief. Ignoring your grief won't make the pain go away and talking about it openly often makes you feel better. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen – without judging you. They will help make you feel understood.

ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY STRESS

You may already feel stressed so don't over-extend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that merely "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief. Experience suggests that it only increases stress and postpones the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

BE WITH SUPPORTIVE, COMFORTING PEOPLE

Identify those friends and relatives who understand that the holiday season can increase your sense of loss and who will allow you to talk openly about your feelings. Find those persons who encourage you to be yourself and accept your feelings both happy and sad.

MENTION THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO HAD DIED

Include the person's name in your holiday conversation. If you are able to talk candidly, other people are more likely to recognize your need to remember that special person who was an important part of your life.

DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Well-meaning friends and family often try to prescribe what is good for you during the holidays. Instead of going along with their plans, focus on what you personally want to do. Discuss your wishes with a caring, trusted friend. Talking about these wishes will help you to clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays. As you become aware of your needs, share them with your friends and family.

(continued on page 14)

BE TOLERANT OF YOUR PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITS

Feelings of loss will probably leave you fatigued. Your low energy level may naturally slow you down. Respect what your body and mind are telling you and lower your own expectations about being at your peak during the holiday season.

EXPRESS YOUR FAITH

During the holidays, you may find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new set of beliefs. Associate with people who understand and respect your need to talk about these beliefs. If your faith is important, you may want to attend a holiday service or special religious ceremony.

EMBRACE YOUR TREASURE OF MEMORIES

Memories are one of the legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. And holidays always make you think about times past. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends. Keep in mind that memories are tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's all right to cry. Memories that were made in love – no one can ever take them away from you.

RENEW YOUR RESOURCES FOR LIVING

Spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of your life. The death of one loved creates opportunities for taking inventory of your life – past, present and future. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and assessing your individual situation. Make the best use of this time to define the positive things in life that surround you.

PLAN AHEAD FOR FAMILY GATHERINGS

Decide the family traditions you want to continue and the new ones you would like to begin following the death of someone loved. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just reacting to whatever happens. Getting caught off guard can create feelings of panic, fear and anxiety during a time of the year when your feelings of grief are already heightened. As you make your plans, however, leave room to change them if you feel it is appropriate.

AS YOU APPROACH THE HOLIDAYS, REMEMBER: GRIEF IS BOTH A NECESSITY AND A PRIVILEGE

It comes as a result of giving and receiving love. Don't let anyone take your grief away. Love yourself. Be patient with yourself. And allow yourself to be surrounded by loving and caring people

Dr. Alan Wolfelt

Our Wishes For You

To those of you whose pain is fresh and raw, and still have courage
to come and share with us, and give us healing through your pain,
we send you love and compassion.

To those of you whose pain of grief, anger, and frustration has begun to soften,
we wish you hope and healing.

To those of you who have found life can be good again, and can tenderly remember
your child tinged with much less sorrow, and not be overwhelmed,
we wish you fond memories, and a meaningful holiday.

To those of you who are struggling in your marriage or relationship,
we wish you patience and understanding to accept one another for what you can give.

To those of you who are struggling with your spirituality,
we wish you peace.

To those of you who give words of comfort and hope to another in the depth of de-
spair.
we say "Thank You".

To those of you who so willingly lend a hand in doing all the chores,
And those who give financial support, that holds the Valley Forge Chapter together,
So we can provide a safe haven for all the bereaved to come and support one an-
other.
we say "Thank You"

We send you love, hope, compassion and a hug, and wish you peace.

Marie and Ken Hofmockel