

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

MAY 2008

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

| | |
|-----------|--|
| May 1 | General Sharing/Suicide |
| Jun 5 | General Sharing |
| Jun 28 | Butterfly Release (see pg. 3) |
| Jul 17 | TCF National Pre-Conf. Regional Coordinator & Professionals Sibling Get Together Registration, Sharing Sessions for all |
| Jul 18-20 | TCF National Conference Nashville, Tennessee - see website: www.compassionatefriends.org |

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 RAPOPORT or RHONDA GOMEZ**



Valley Forge Chapter

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NEW FRIENDS

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 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.

APRIL REFRESHMENTS

Rhonda & Frank Gomez, in honor of all the children and siblings lost to all
Compassionate Friends families

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments, please call **Ann or Rhonda (484)919-0820**.

LOVE GIFTS

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).

BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM

Presented by the Valley Forge Chapter
of the Compassionate Friends

EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO ATTEND

Tyler Arboretum
515 Painter Road
Media, PA 19063

Saturday, June 28, 2008 at 2:00 PM

Phone: 610-566-9134 Email: info@tylerarboretum.org

(Raindate: Sunday, June 29, 2008)

Cost \$9.00 per butterfly

A family can order one butterfly to share, or order one butterfly for each family member. You may order as many butterflies as you wish. If you are unable to come on this date, we can release the butterfly that you have purchased in your loved one's name. The names of all loved ones will be read during the program.

The Arboretum admission fee must be paid upon arrival in order to attend this event:

Adult \$5; children, ages 3-15, are \$3; and children under 3 are free.

(The Entertainment Book - Philadelphia West has a coupon G42 with one complimentary admission to Tyler when a second admission of equal or greater value is purchased)

Tyler Arboretum is a 650 acre sanctuary of natural beauty. It has horticultural collections, hiking trails, historic buildings, butterfly house with native butterflies in all stages of their life cycle, children's maze, picnic tables, and is open until 8PM.

For questions, please call 484-919-0820

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Total number of butterflies ordered: _____ \$9.00 each - Total money sent _____

Please make checks payable to "TCF Valley Forge Chapter" and mail to:
Ann Rapoport
14 Lakewood Drive
Media, PA 19063

For directions view www.tcfvalleyforge.org

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.

A MOMENT OF HELP

After I lost my son Nino to a drowning accident, a young scientist walked into my office at Denver University. He was always extremely detached in his interactions with people, so I was not surprised that he asked almost casually whether I was feeling better.

I could not answer his question, because I had already started to cry. "Would you rather not have had a son at all?" he wanted to know. I shook my head and cried harder.

He handed me his handkerchief and said firmly, "I suppose you need to cry yourself well." And without even a hint of emotion, he sat down facing me.

In the presence of so much detachment, I managed to recover my "composure." But the visitor took my hand and held it silently, until I began to cry again. Then he said, "Keep crying. You are not well yet."

I will not forget this encounter. It told me two things when I very much needed to hear them. First; the expression of grief is necessary. And second; after a great sorrow, we can expect - in time - to be "well" again.

Sascha Wagner

SHARED THOUGHTS ON "MOTHER'S GUILT"

The month of May has always been an ego booster for most of us mothers, as we receive cards of praise and flattery from our children. But now that our child has died, and we are walking around with a hole in our soul, those same greeting cards can cause us guilt by not feeling worthy of the words.

We most always refine our priorities, and make new standards for ourselves after the death of our children. One of those priorities is don't put off spending time together or expressing our love. With our hindsight of knowing the child's' life was cut short, we critique our motherhood as though we could have been super-human. We measure our mothering performance as though we could have given 100% of our time to our precious child. We punish ourselves with guilt, by remembering specifics of harsh words or deeds. Most often these are very normal human things most parents do and say. We know we cannot change, or take back, any infliction we place upon our child.

When we were entrusted with the gift of our children, we were not given hindsight, or the ability to be perfect. We were expected to handle all the other responsibilities placed upon us by other family members, and many mothers dealt with jobs to provide financial support for the family. This means there was not time, nor energy, to be the perfect parent. We were even expected to make mistakes, but now guilt holds us responsible for all our parental shortcomings. I have learned if we did what we thought was right at the time, or the best we could, that was all we could do. It is unfair to measure our performance as a parent with hindsight or super-human powers that we did not possess.

I'm sure our children did not judge us nearly so harshly as we judge ourselves. You may find it very helpful to tell your deceased child how you feel, what you wish you could have done, and how much you love them. I, personally, feel they are in an all-knowing state, and can better understand our expression of love. I'm sure a lot of our guilt would subside, if our children could express their image of us as parents.

Love is the greatest gift we have ever given or received. Just the fact we hurt so badly, and our pain is so intense, tells us we had great love for our children.

The pain of losing our children can never stop totally, but we can help to ease it to the point we can live with it. We would be very angry if someone would judge us as unfairly as we judge ourselves. We must first learn to love ourselves again, so we can love others. We love our children, even with their flaws. We must respect our children enough to know they love us, even when we are not the perfect parent. Don't minimize their love by thinking they were not capable of forgiving, or understanding that we did our best, and that was good enough.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

ON DEALING WITH A VIOLENT DEATH

1. Generally it takes 18-24 months to stabilize after the death of a family member. It can take much longer when the death was a violent one. Recognize the length of the mourning process. Beware of developing unrealistic expectations of yourself.
2. Your worst times are usually not at the moment a tragic event takes place. Then you're in a state of shock or numbness. Often you slide "into the pits" 4-7 months after the event. Strangely, when you're in the pits and tempted to despair, this may be the time when most people expect you to be over your loss.
3. When people ask how you're doing, don't always say, 'Fine.'" Let some people know how terrible you feel.
4. Talking with a true friend or with others who've been there and survived can be very helpful. Those who've been there speak your language. Only they can really say, "I know, I understand." You are not alone.
5. Often depression is a cover for anger. Learn to uncork your bottle and find appropriate ways to release your bottled-up anger. What you're going through seems so unfair and unjust.
6. Take time to lament, to experience being a victim. It may be necessary to spend some time feeling sorry for yourself. "Pity Parties" sometimes are necessary and can be therapeutic.
7. It's all right to cry, to question, to be weak. Beware of allowing yourself to be "out on a pedestal" by others who tell you what an inspiration you are because of your strength and your ability to cope so well. IF THEY ONLY KNEW.
8. Remember you may be a rookie at the experience you're going through. This is probably the first violent death you've coped with. You don't know what to do or how to act. You need help.
9. Reach out and try to help others in some ways, at least. This little step forward may help prevent you from dwelling on yourself
10. Many times of crisis ultimately can become times of opportunity. Mysteriously your faith in yourself, in others, in God can be deepened through crisis. Seek out persons who can serve as symbols of hope to you.

*The above thoughts are offered by **Father Kenneth Czillinger** of Cincinnati, Ohio who, for many years has been involved in working with the dying and grieving. He also participated in forming support groups for parents who have lost children through death.*

YOU WERE ONLY 19

You have passed, but the pain still lives on inside of me.
 A young man, a tragic end, you were only 19.
 Waking every morning imagining that I was still 10.
 Wishing you were never gone, wishing your death was just pretend.
 They said it would get easier and the hurt would go away.
 Your pictures hang above the mantel.
 I look and smile with a tear, each and every day.
 I remember how hard it was, and how I always cried.
 Mom and Dad were so sad, I was so angry.
 I couldn't understand why you had died.
 Now I am 18, trying to stand my ground.
 Wondering how I got through 8 years without you around.
 Times are hard, growing up is so scary.
 Knowing you can't be there through college,
 boyfriends and parties, not even when I'm married.
 It's weird to be your age,
 and it hurts to do all the things you missed.
 Wanting to ask, if I became all that you had wished.
 I was 10, but you were only 19.
 Years have passed and it still hurts,
 but your life lives on forever, in my memory.

*Dedicated to my brother **Stephen Andrew Schark, Jr.** 6/11/80 - 12/10/99*

Written by: *Alexis Noel*

Alone in the

Night sky,

God bless that child,

Every one loved him, I will

Love you too, Nathan, forever.

*In memory of my brother,
Nathan Moyer Schewe*

*Written by **Madeline Schewe**
 age 8*

“Commitment to life and living for yourself, spouse and family, and commitment to your child’s memory are four choices you must make. Each one requires perseverance and patience. Failure to make these commitments will extend the tragedy by increasing the loss.”

Nancy Hogan

The depth of your sorrow diminishes slowly and, at times, imperceptibly. Your recovery is not an act of disloyalty to the one who has died. Nor is it achieved by forgetting the past. Try to strike a delicate balance between a yesterday that should be remembered and a tomorrow that must be created.

Author Unknown

SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH GRIEF

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We do need the help of relatives and friends, and may need the help of Professional Counseling. At the same time, it is important for us to make the effort to help ourselves. Remember, that a lot of energy will be used for healing. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of “LOVE THY NEIGHBOR” - we forget the part - “AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF”. Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief has it's unique side. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

1. **Go Gently**. Don't rush too much. Your body needs energy for repair.
2. Don't take on new responsibilities right away. Don't over-extend yourself. **Keep decision making to a minimum.**
3. Accept help and support when offered.
4. Ask for help. Our family and friends can't read our minds. It is very important to find someone who cares, understands, and with whom you may talk freely. It's okay to need comforting.
5. Seek the support of others...Invite a relative/friend for dinner or overnight. Also, consider meeting new people.
6. Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.
7. Lean **into** the pain. It cannot be outrun. Let the grief/healing process run its full course.
8. Through this emotional period, it is okay to feel depressed. Crying does make you feel better.
9. If Sundays, Holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
10. Seek the help of a **qualified** Counselor or Clergy if grief is unresolved.
11. Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea and colas.
12. Good nutrition is important to help the healing process. (Decrease junk food and try to eat a balanced meal)
13. Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling/thinking. Hopefully, when you re-read it later, you will see that you are getting better.
14. **Read** -- there are many helpful books on grief. If grief is understood, it is a little easier to handle. A little less frightening.
15. Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.) It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and may aid sleep.
16. Begin towards building a pleasant time with family and friends. Don't feel guilty if you have a good time. Your loved one would want you to be happy.

Author Unknown

WHEN TOMORROW STARTS WITHOUT ME

When tomorrow starts without me,
and I'm not there to see;
If the sun should rise and find your eyes
all filled with tears for me.

I wish so much you wouldn't cry,
the way you did today,
while thinking of the many things,
we didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me,
as much as I love you,
and each time you think of me,
I know you'll miss me too.

But when tomorrow starts without me,
please try to understand,
that an angel came and called my name,
and took me by the hand,

And said my place was ready,
in heaven far above,
and that I'd have to leave behind,
all those I dearly love.

But as I turned to walk away,
a tear fell from my eye,
for all my life, I'd always thought,
I didn't want to die.

I had so much to live for,
and so much yet to do,
it seemed almost impossible,
that I was leaving you.

I thought of all the yesterdays,
the good ones and the bad,
I thought of all the love we shared,
and all the fun we had.

If I could relive yesterday,
just even for awhile,
I'd say good-bye and kiss you
and maybe see you smile.

But then I fully realized,
that this could never be,
for emptiness and memories,
would take the place of me.

And when I thought of worldly things,
I might miss come tomorrow,
I thought of you, and when I did,
my heart was filled with sorrow.

But when I walked through heaven's gates,
I felt so much at home.
When God looked down and smiled at me,
from His great golden throne.

He said "This is eternity,
and all I've promised you".
Today for life on earth is past,
but here it starts anew.

I promise no tomorrow,
but today will always last,
and since each day's the same day,
there's no longing for the past.

But you have been so faithful,
so trusting and so true.
Though there were times you did some things,
you knew you shouldn't do.

But you have been forgiven
and now at last you're free.
So won't you take my hand
and share my life with me?"

So when tomorrow starts without me,
don't think we're far apart,
for every time you think of me,
I'm right here, in your heart.

David M. Romano