

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month, at 7:45 PM (ending at 9:30 PM) We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Founders Hall, Valley Forge Road and Henderson Rds., King of Prussia, PA

For info call Rhonda @ (484) 919-0820

Meeting Schedule and other

TCF Events of Interest.

It is our intention to have a Zoom meeting in April 2021. Please send an email to Rhonda (rhonda@tcfvalleyforge.org) if you plan on attending. We received a call from the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church indicating that there will be no meetings at least until sometime in 2021. My TCF email has changed it is rhonda@tcfvalleyforge.org



April 2021

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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 editor.

There are no dues or fees to belong to the Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations (which we call love gifts) given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of the 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 Rhonda Gomez

TCF Mission Statement

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

NEW FRIENDS

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We all have been in the depths of despair, and offer unconditional love and understanding to all of you, it sometimes takes several meetings to feel the full benefit of group sharing. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love and understanding to all of you.

LOVE GIFTS

CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve, too, for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun-loving but now are serious and absorbed.

Our friends and family miss the 'old us' too, and their comments show it. "Don't you think it's time to return to normal?" "You don't laugh as much as you used to." They are grieving for the person who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar who shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when our child dies. We wonder, our family wonders, our friends wonder - - when will he or she come out of it? Will they make it through the long sleep? What hues will show when they emerge? If you've ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of a cocoon, you'll know that the change is not quick or easy - - but worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the "new us." When our priorities become different and people become more important than things; when we grasp a hand that reaches and reach in turn to pull another from his own cocoon; when we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge, then we can proudly say, "I have survived against overwhelming odds. Even though my child's death is not worth the change in and of itself, the changes and the challenges give us hope that we can be happy, we can feel fulfilled again, we can love again.

Sherry Mutchler - Appleton, WI

Tears don't erase all the hurt,
Tears don't bring the dead to life,
But tears do help to ease the pain.

Phillip W. Williams

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.

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.

Anniversaries

- Bill Padove & Jen Scaless - son - Zachary - 4/26**
- Denis Nicholson Asselin & Judy - son - Nathaniel - 4/15**
- George & Anne Beerley - daughter - Jennifer Beerley - 4/19**
- Leslie Brown - son - Scott - 4/4**
- Terry & Sam Capizzi - son - Sammy - 4/6**
- Diana Clark - grandson - Alexander - 4/5**
- Judy & William Cosgrove - son - Michael Cosgrove - 4/17**
- Ed & Sue Duffy - son - Peter - 4/11**
- Nancy & David Dykty - brother - Jim Sutton - 4/16**
- Diane Goldberg - nephew - Sammy - 4/6**
- Frank & Rhonda Gomez - brother - Paul - 4/26**
- Joanne Haley - son - Douglas Haley - 4/3**
- Nancy Hartzell - son - Adam - 4/8**
- Walt & Adele Higgins - son/stepson - Brian - 4/17**
- Sigrid Hirschhorn - daughter - Samantha - 4/6**
- Sharon Hirst - son - Tom - 4/16**
- Janet & Dave Keller - granddaughter - Elily Lou Miller - 4/4**
- Joan Kellett - son - Daniel Thomas Kellett - 4/29**
- Lynn Kivlen - son - Brien Kivlen - 4/26**
- Terry Kozlewski - son - Frankie - 4/1**
- Elaine Marino - son - Mark Joseph Marino - 4/21**
- Jennifer McGowan Clark - brother - Joseph McGowan - 4/15**
- Susan McKelvey - son - John - 4/23**
- Sharmell & Chris McMurray - son - Ryan - 4/26**
- Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy - daughter - Marian Mountjoy - 4/16**
- John Mscisz - grandson - Liam John Williamson - 4/6**
- Mary Mulholland - son - Joseph McGowan - 4/15**

Marian Mullahy - brother - Matt - 4/2
Sheila & Mike Mullin - son - Matthew - 4/25
Barbara & Jeff Norris - son - Greg - 4/1
Dale Pearlstein - son - Jeffrey - 4/17
Terri Pfeiffer - son - Matthew - 4/20
Maureen & David Rich - daughter - Mallory Kirby Rich - 4/26
Harry & Carol Schultz - son - Brian Andrew Schultz - 4/18
Joy Conard Settles - son - R. Gary Korn - 4/30
Jeffrey Smith - son - Jacob Smith - 4/5
Robert & Sigrid Snow - son - Barry Snow - 4/28
Edward & Mary Stimson - son - Keith Stimson - 4/7
Dave & Lynn Strange - son - Bradley - 4/21
Fred & Irene Sutton - son - Jim Sutton - 4/16
Tracey Sutton-Vitabile - brother - Jim Sutton - 4/16
Allan Thomas - wife - Zinta - 4/23
Harry & Lynne Urian - son - Mike - 4/22

WOULD THEY COME BACK ?

We miss them so, but would they come back? When I see the beauty of the birds soaring ecstatically in the sky, somehow claiming the beauty as their own; I watch them carefully, sometimes they are playfully cutting into the wind to forge in their direction of choice. I think of our loved ones up in heaven, and I feel they are as happy as the birds soaring and dipping and floating with wings spread wide. There too, however, they have important work to do: Greeting the new loved ones into the kingdom of heaven and acting as God's angels to watch. I sense that they wouldn't come back if given a choice. It would be like a caged bird who had had his wings clipped to protect him from flying outside into an uncaring world: Walking on the floor in stoic resignation.

Bea Kroon — TCF, Bradenton, FL

GRIEF

GRIEF is sometimes silent – like snowflakes falling on a dark winter's night – but never peaceful or serene or pretty like the pure white snow. When grief is silent, the tears seem to turn to ice, like the snowflakes, before they reach our eyes.

GRIEF is sometimes raging – like a monstrous thunderstorm - with all its fury and bolts of lightning striking our hearts at every angle. When grief is raging, the tears come in torrents like the rain and flood our soul.

GRIEF: Whether it be silent or raging . . . IT HURTS.

Verna Smith, TCF, Ft. Worth, TX

BIRTHDAYS

Barbie Blake - son - Chad Blake, 4/15
Leslie Brown - son - Scott, 4/3
Ellen & James Burbano - son - Eric, 4/19
Gina Cappelli - son - Dan Foley, 4/20
Phyllis & James Casey - son - Jim "Jimmer" Casey, 4/18
Linda DiPasquale - son - Thomas, 4/26
Janie Ebersole - daughter - Ashley Sankus, 4/19
Ginny Ebert - son - Jason, 4/17
Scott & Charlene Fazekas - Son - Eric Scott Fazekas, 4/25
Maureen & Jim Fleagle - son - Brian, 4/20
Stephanie Grier - son - John "JD" Grier, 4/15
Nancy & Gerald Hall - son - Douglas Byron Hall, 4/15
Kristen Hallman - brother - Joey, 4/10
Othell & William Heaney - son - Roger Heaney, 4/17
Jeanne R Helmers - daughter - Betsy Helmers, 4/7
Cynthia Hornyak - daughter - Meredith, 4/1
John Horulko - son - Daniel, 4/6
Monica Horulko - son - Daniel, 4/6
Margaret Huss - son - Daniel, 4/18
Dennis & Lois Ianovalle - son - Dennis, 4/18
Carl and Dorothy Johnson-Speight - daughter - Carlana Speight, 4/6
Roxanne Kamilatos - daughter - Dina, 4/29
Janet & Dave Keller - granddaughter - Elily Lou Miller, 4/4
Karen Lopera - son - Michael, 4/3
Bob & Laura Latshaw - son - Scott, 4/22
Susan & Richard Leoni/Cutler - son - Kevin, 4/3
Betty Manzi - grandson - Ronnie T. Seal, Jr., 4/17
Elaine Marino - son - Mark Joseph Marino, 4/20
Michelle Mazzio - son - Brendan Mazzio, 4/18
Marjorie Meckley - son - Douglas Meckley, 4/25
Bob & Janet Milnazik - daughter - Kim, 4/24



Sheila & Mike Mullin - son - Matthew, 4/10

Ashlie Nawrocki - sister - Chereen, 4/3

Rosemary Peterson - son - Donald R. Peterson, 4/18

Thomas & Mary Jane Poore - son - Bradley Poore, 4/25

Joe & Kim Pratt - son - Paul, 4/7

Art & Carol Silverman - daughter - Cheryl Beth Silverman, 4/23

Robert & Sigrid Snow - son - Barry Snow, 4/28 - son - Kevin Snow, 4/19

Marissa Wadsworth - son - TJ Wadsworth, 4/8

Deb Walter - son - Evan, 4/18

Ellen & Dale Weaver - son - Jeffrey M. Weaver, 4/12

Terry & Bob Wolfe - son and stepson - Steven Moyer, 4/22

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SHOCK & DENIAL

Shock is often our survival after the loss of a child or sibling. Our minds go into a state of numbness that insulates us from the pain of fully facing the death all at once. We have discussed anticipatory grief with long term illness, and most will say even though the physician predicts the loved one to be terminal, the mind will still hold back in accepting the fact that death is inevitable.

It is natural to deny anything that will bring such unbearable pain. We use this cushion to get us through that very early stage of our grief, whether it be sudden or long-term. Our brain tries to take one step at a time.

In retrospect, the numbness that shock brought, insulated and cushioned me enough to survive. The time we stay in shock varies greatly. It can be an aide in our grief, but we can not stay there forever.

We usually move into denial. I found myself stuck here for a while; I just didn't want to face the fact that future plans did not include Doug. I wasn't finished mothering him, and having many other children did not help in the beginning. I had a lot of unfinished love that belonged to Doug alone, and it could not be directed toward another child. I felt very guilty for being so all consumed with grief, and not being able to function for my surviving children.

We aren't ready to move on, so we frequently tell ourselves it is all a bad dream that will go away. We don't want to be a part of anything that says our child is dead. The pain is too great to admit our loss is permanent. We can never approve of the happening, but we eventually have to acknowledge the fact that it did happen, so that we can establish where we are. Once we totally acknowledge the death, we move on to other stages of grief.

No matter how well we have learned the grief stages, we can not rush through them to reach the other side. It is called grief work because of the effort and time it takes. We must lean into the pain. It is so gut-wrenching, and we have all had feelings that we just can't survive it. But it softens, we learn to live and love ourselves again. We regain our ability to feel, look for a tomorrow, and all those good memories that we worried about forgetting are still there. When the healing takes away the gut-wrenching pain, the memories can be pleasant. I wish you could be where I am, without going through where I have been. Peace is there for us, but never comes as soon as we would like it to. Be patient with yourself

God Bless, Marie Hofmockel, TCF Valley Forge

SIBLINGS - A BROTHER'S DEATH

Barbara Lazear Ascher's brother, Bobby, died of AIDS at the age 31. Following is an excerpt of a beautifully written sensitive article describing the author's struggle with grief. "A Brother's Death" was originally printed in the New York Times Magazine.

When we first learned of Bobby's illness, it seemed incomprehensible that this could be happening to our baby brother. My sister and I began a journey into paralysis. There were days when it seemed we had to concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other if we were to walk at all. If we traveled more than a couple of blocks, we were exhausted for the rest of the day.

We were hungry, we weren't hungry. We made chocolate chip cookies and chocolate brownies and didn't eat them. We opened and closed the refrigerator door, looking for something that might cushion the pain, fill the chasm that was opening from within.

Now I realize that this was the beginning of grief which starts in the stomach, yawning like the gaping mouth in Munch's painting. "The Scream." But what did we know of grief? We were young, our beloved had not yet died. I began to understand that grieving is like walking. The urge is there, but you need a guiding hand; you need someone to teach you how.

I went to speak with a wise and trusted minister at my church who warned that there were bad times ahead. The death of a sibling, he said, grievous in itself, is also a startling reminder of our own mortality. I suppose it's not dissimilar to the time in youth when we first learned of our origins and began to understand -- if they made me, then they can make another. After that we became the nervous sentinels of our territory. When a sibling dies, the absolute certainty of death replaces the cherished illusion that maybe we'll be the exceptions. When a sibling dies, death tugs at our own shirttails. There's no unclasping its persistent grip. "You too," it says. "Yes, even you."

When you are new to grief, you learn that there's no second-guessing it. It will have its way with you. Don't be fooled by the statistics you read: Widows have one bad year; orphans three. Grief doesn't read schedules.

One morning three weeks after Bobby died, I arose feeling happy and energetic. Well, now, I thought, I guess we've taken care of that. Wrong. The next morning I was awakened by a wail I thought was coming from the storm outside until I realized it was coming from me.

Grief will fool you with its disguises. Some days you insist that you're fine -- you're just angry at a friend the wrong thing. One day I wept into the lettuce and peaches at our local market when an acquaintance approached to scold me for my stand in an old battle. Of course, we both assumed that she was responsible for my tears.

You learn that you can cry and stop and laugh and even follow a taxi driver's commands to "Have a nice day," and then cry again. You learn that there is no such thing as crying forever. Three months ago I was certain that I would never be happy again. I was wrong. Grief is like the wind. When it's blowing hard, you adjust your sails and run before it. It blows too hard, you stay in the harbor, close the hatches and don't take calls. When it's gentle, you go sailing, have a picnic, take a swim.

You go wherever it takes you. There are no bulwarks to withstand it. Should you erect one, it will eventually tire of the game and blow the walls in.

We cannot know another's grief, as deeply personal as love and pain. I cannot measure my own against the sorrow of my brother's friends who must wonder every day which among them will be next... I shy away from the magnitude of my brother's own grief when, upon being diagnosed, he heard the final click of a door as it closed on possibility.

A friend of mine said of her son when he died at 30, "He was just beginning to look out at the world and make maps." So was my brother. And then there was no place to go.

Barbara Lazear Ascher, NY, NY



We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, just as your hope becomes my hope. We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds and relationships. We are young and we are old, some of us are far along in our grief but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helplessness and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength. While some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of the Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow. We need not walk alone, we are the Compassionate Friends.

The Compassionate Friends Credo



*A bereavement organization
For parents, siblings and families
We offer friendship, love and understanding
We talk, we listen, we share, we care.*

Valley Forge Chapter
of the Compassionate Friends
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