

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

AUGUST 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

- Aug 5 General Sharing
- Aug 7 Butterfly Release - Chanticleer Gardens
(see page 3)
- Sept 2 General Sharing & Death by Suicide
- June 15-17, 2011 34th National Conference
St. Paul - Minneapolis , MN

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, DIANA CLARK
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
RHONDA GOMEZ or ANN MURRAY**



Valley Forge Chapter

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BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO ATTEND
CHANTICLEER GARDEN -- Open 10-5
786 Church Road Wayne, PA 19087
Phone: 610-687-4163 www.ChanticleerGarden.org

Chanticleer Gardens is wheel chair accessible, picnic tables available .
Please bring folding chairs or a blanket to sit on.
Saturday, August 7, 2010 at 11 AM
(This event will be held rain or shine)

NEW FRIENDS

Janet Leflar son *Scott* (38)

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

JULY REFRESHMENTS

Frank & Rhonda Gomez in loving memory of our son *Frankie's* anniversary

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

LOVE GIFTS

Robert & Kathleen Grossi in loving memory of our son *James Michael Grossi* (23) on his birthday. We love and miss you, Mom, Dad, Teresa's family & Patty's family.

Fred & Irene Sutton in loving memory of our son *Jim Sutton* (21) on his birthday.

Roxborough Manayunk Lioness in memory of *Dennis Kearns* (36)

BOOK DONATIONS:

Mama Mockingbird by Sauni Wood "In loving memory of *Jonathan* and *Brian Rapoport*"

I Heard Your Mommy Died by Mark Serivani "In loving memory of *Brian Rapoport*"

I Heard Your Daddy Died by Mark Serivani "In loving memory of *Jonathan Rapoport*"



Alan Pedersen's "Angles Across the USA"

.....Memorial Boards



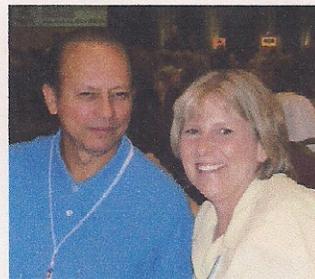
.....Lining up for the Memorial Walk.....



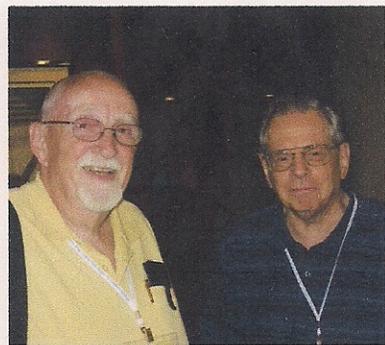
We Remember Them



Remembering Our Frankie



Socializing in the lobby



Reminiscing



.....Saturday Banquet.....



.....Saturday Banquet.....



Candle Lighting

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOU

Survival after your child dies often forces you into stances that are foreign to your nature. It's a time, for instance, when, though you've been encouraged most of your life to fight the inclination to be self-centered, suddenly learning to allow yourself to be selfish becomes a large part of your ability to survive this trauma.

Old habits are hard to break, however, you often find yourself more concerned with the needs of others on the periphery of your life than with your own. In the meetings and on the phone it is obvious many parents are trying to make their grief symptoms march to the tune of others' drums. The old caretaker in them wants to continue to take care.

Those of us who are further down the road of grief encourage the more newly bereaved to know how necessary it is for you to put your needs first now. For a while, allow yourself to be selfish, and to be vocal, if necessary, about your right to take care of you and do the things that comfort you before you consider others.

It is your child, your grief, your needs, your survival you're dealing with here. Take care of you, and if that seems selfish and self-centered in the eyes of others – so be it! There'll be plenty of time, after your grief has softened and you've learned how to live more comfortably with this loss, for you to resume some of your old patterns. Hopefully, unselfishness will again be one of them. For right now though, take time for you, for you're one of the most important people you know.

Author Unknown

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

Our income from love gifts and United Way has decreased considerably. The cost of printing has increased. The newsletter costs approximately \$370 per month. We are exhausting the Chapter's savings. We are asking if possible, would you please receive your newsletter by email.

We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know **"We need not walk alone"**. A newsletter helps to keep our TCF family informed of local and national events. We consider this an important function of our program.

We are asking if you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, 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@hybridpplars.com

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.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Marilynn Anton, cousin/godson *Douglas Hofmockel* 8/27
Rob and Janet Beiswenger, son *Jared* 8/17
Dorothy & Jack Bert, son *Matthias* 8/16
Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua, son *Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua* 8/20
Richard & Jo Bewley, son *Kevin Bewley* 8/24
Marvin & Wilma Bordetsky, daughter *Noreen Bordetsky Cook* 8/29
Thomas & Janet Cleary, son *Ryan* 8/21
Evelyn M. Corrado, son *John A. Corrado* 8/5
Allison Crowder, daughter *Amber* 8/8
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David* 8/26
Cindy & Jim Donahue, son *Michael Donahue* 8/2
Jim and Patty Duffy, son *Michael Duffy* 8/8
Nancy & David Dykty, brother *Jim Sutton* 8/7
Tom & Irene Edmunds, son *Kyle Derek Edmunds* 8/1
Ron & Sue Gamza, daughter & grandson *Rachel & Troy* 8/22
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, son *Paul Gibbons* 8/13
Mary Lou Harrison, son *Lance 'Scott' Harrison* 8/4
Danielle Hemmench Ricci, boyfriend *Ryan* 8/21
Beatrice K Hildebrandt, son *John R. Hildebrandt* 8/26
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel* 8/27
Jan & Dan Jackson, son *John Jackson* 8/18
Michael & Betsy Jarrett, son *Michael Jarrett* 8/13
Joan Kingslake, daughter *Ann Kingslake Woods* 8/3
Sue Lawlor, son *Jim* 8/24
Mary Leech, daughter *Phyllis Leach* 8/28
Kathleen & John Leeper, son *Shaun Michael Leeper* 8/17
Janet Leflar, son *Scott* 8/11
John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Heather Logue* 8/16
Timothy & Maxine Lurowist, daughter *Kristine* 8/24
Mary MacFarland, son *Marc* 8/4
Anna E Marchese, son *Matthew Paul Marchese* 8/28
Diane Mazzagatti, son *John Pirocchi, Jr.* 8/3
Sue McMaster, cousin *Patty* 8/30
Joanne F Michini, son *Alfred J. Michini, II* 8/2
Alexandra Milas, daughter *Nicole Penelope Wiseley* 8/23

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS continued

Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* 8/21
Kathleen Mitchel, daughter *Danielle* 8/21
John B. & Lillian Neff, son *Patrick Neff* 8/30
Sharon Ott, daughter *Amber* 8/12
Joan Palumbo, son *Michael* 8/4
Sharyn & Joe Pozzuolo, son *Joey Brad Pozzuolo* 8/26
Joe & Marti Purifico, son *Jeffrey* 8/3
Elise Rice, son *Raymond Anthony Rice* 8/29
Bonnie Rosen, son *Troy* 8/30
Becky Rotkowski, brother *Brian* 8/17
Marie & Sam Schmeltzer, son *Sam "Sonny" Schmeltzer* 8/22
Pamela Schneibolk, brother *Douglas Hofmockel* 8/27
Harry & Carol Schultz, son *Brian Andrew Schultz* 8/23
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, brother *Marc Ernest Stein* 8/17
Ray & Lorraine Spear, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear* 8/15
Elaine & Joe Stillwell, daughter *Margaret Mary O'Connor* 8/23
Karen & Alan Stoner, daughter *Holly Patricia Stoner* 8/11
Fred & Irene Sutton, son *Jim Sutton* 8/7
Tracey Sutton-Vitabile, brother *Jim Sutton* 8/7
Hellmut Theil, son *Hellmut Theil, Jr.* 8/2
Thomas & Sara Thiermann, daughter *Heather Bruce Thiermann* 8/26
Pat Villante, daughter *Patty* 8/30
Andy & Peg Yanoviak, daughter *Elizabeth "Betsy" Hershman* 8/6

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Maryellen & Dick Abell, son *Brian Abell* - 8/19
Emily L. Alm, son *Bryan W. Alm* - 8/23
Lisa Bellopede, son *Johnny* - 8/12
Dorothy & Jack Bert, son *Matthias* - 8/29
Bruce & Barb Campbell, son *Greg* - 8/21
Joann (D) & Gary Chavez, son *Christopher Dale Chavez* - 8/4
Mary & John Chelius, son *John J. Chelius, Jr.* - 8/24
Liz & Scott Conaghan, brother *Jan* - 8/27
Jean & Bill Cotter, son *Patrick Cotter* - 8/11
Holly & John Cross, son *John* - 8/13
Carol Curtiss, grandson *Kurt* - 8/20
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *G. Robert Daily, Jr.* - 8/10
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *John Jr* - 8/17
Cindy & Jim Donahue, son *Michael Donahue* - 8/2
Richard & Martha Fenoglio, daughter *Judith Fenoglio Daw* - 8/6

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SURVIVAL IS POSSIBLE, BUT NOT EASY

Society has placed a great burden on bereaved parents. Grieving is appropriate at our children's funeral and for a short period after the burial. We must remember these social etiquettes were not set by grieving people. Since they don't have a clue about the depth of despair it takes to get over the loss, there is no way we can or need to adhere to society's expectations.

We create much more stress by trying not to cry, than we do when we cry. Grief is both a physical and mental emotion. Tears help to release our stress. Women normally find it easier to unlock their feelings, for women's everyday conversations are frequently on children and family, which is about feelings. Men tend to converse about sports, jobs, and their accomplishments. This makes it much more difficult for men, for sharing their personal feelings is a foreign subject for them. Men are helping to change the old adage "big boys don't cry", but they don't have experience in expressing their feelings. Our men in Compassionate Friends have found more freedom in sharing, for they have a mutual loss. And know falling apart helps to "get it together", and prevents emotional and psychosomatic problems.

The loss of our children is more than a heavy burden, it overwhelms and suffocates us. We can have grief attacks years later at birthdays, holidays, graduations, wedding, etc. Even sounds, sights, and smells can trigger grief. We can survive special events well one year, and the next year we may have a lot of trouble getting through that same event. Grief is a process, not an event that happens and is over quickly. We never get completely over it. Our loss is a family crisis that affects everyone in the household. Not only do we suffer for our personal pain, but we also suffer watching other family members hurt.

Survival is possible, but certainly not easy. We know life goes on, but fresh grief is not ready to confirm that. We know there is no gentle way to confront the reality of death. We must do our grieving daily, and not rush through the aspects of grief that are giving us the most trouble. We need to spend time to resolve it.

Eventually we reach a place where we can "regroup" ourselves more easily. Things and events that used to take weeks or months to recover from, become hours and minutes, and that makes life tolerable. As the good hours get longer, and the bad ones lessen, we gain a renewed sense of confidence. We can make a meaningful life for ourselves, but it takes a lot of struggling to let go of the devastation of the death. Once this happens, we can devote our selves to the **life** of our child, and build a bridge to them.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

Now that your life knows every darkness and sorrow,
Now that your time trembles with mourning and pain,
Now that you eyes see only empty horizons,
Now that your hand touches the center of grief.

Leave yourself open to comfort and caring,
Leave yourself open to softness and friendship,
Leave yourself open to kindness and blessing,
And try to listen for the still music of hope.

Sascha Wagner

MY FIRST FIVE YEARS AS AN ONLY CHILD

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I've aged thirty years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I've accomplished the many things of a typical young adult – learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career. Every one of my accomplishments have been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children, or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I've learned to accept that he's not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changed to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I'm angry about all of the things that we've missed and all of the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass. In these past five years, I've been forced to grow up too fast. I've been forced into a new outlook on life. I've felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. That person is locked away and is gone forever. Maybe I'm a better person now because of what I've been through. Five years ago I never thought I'd survive, but I'm still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I've made it this far.

Kristina Steiner

TCF – Staten Island, NY

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who dies. Anger does not mean you loved them less, it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

*This Healing Journey
An Anthology for
Bereaved Siblings*

**Cry when you want to:
Laugh when you can.**

SOME THINGS I LOST AND ONE I DIDN'T

When my son died, I lost many things. I lost the pleasure of his company, the joy of watching him grow up, and the hope of enjoying his companionship in the future. I lost heart for a while, but I didn't lose my son. He died.

I don't like to hear or read sentences such as, "she lost her child," when what is meant is that the child has died. Someone who loses things is careless and no parent is so careless as to lose a child.

To be told that we "lost" our children makes us sound as if we were in some way responsible, just as we are

responsible when we lose our glasses, or pocketbooks, or even our tempers. I suspect that when we hear that we "lost" our children and when we say, "I lost my child," we might feel a little guilty, as if we did something or failed to do something, to cause the loss.

We don't need to feel guilty. I know that I have lost a lot, but always say that my son died, because that is, in fact, what happened.

Claire Hopley
TCF Amherst, MA

LIFE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT

Life is what we make it, I said with the confidence of youth.
My own well-ordered life would be the shining proof
That ills that befall others, would never come to me.
But, then from nowhere came a blow that made me with pain.
The illusion of control was gone never to come again.
Life isn't what we make it, I railed against this bitter fate.
But only how we take it, and this I refuse to take.
But gradually acceptance came and with it some release.
Of the vice-like grip upon my heart of rage & anguished grief.
Life is what we make it, I slowly came to know.
If only in the way we take its unexpected blows.

Roberta Robertson

I FEEL THE JOY

Never let there be a time when
I cannot feel the pain,
When hurt and sadness
are blocked out,
And only numbness reigns.

At least with pain I am alive,
But numbness will destroy,
For if I cannot feel the pain,
Then I cannot feel the joy.

Joanetta Hendel
TCF, Indianapolis, IN

FALLING APART

I seem to be falling apart.
My attention span can be measured in seconds.
My patience in minutes,
I cry at the drop of a hat.
I forget things constantly.
The morning toast burns daily.
I forget to sign the checks.
Half of everything in the house is misplaced.
Anxiety and restlessness are my
constant companions
Rainy days seem extra dreary.
Sunny days seem an outrage.
Other people's pain and frustration seem
insignificant.
Laughing, happy people seem out of place in
my world.
It has become routine to feel half crazy.
I am normal, I am told.
I am a newly grieving person

Eloise Cole

"HOLD ON"

For those of you who are hurting too deeply, whose pain is too fresh, whose child's death is still too close to hear me, I'd like to give you the message "hold on, hold on tight." Right now for you, there seems to be little sunshine, little hope and no energy to choose life. So hang on tight.

And if you know someone who is struggling just to hang on, reach out to them right now. Loan them some of your strength, knowing they will loan you some of theirs when you need it. That's what TCF is all about; helping each other through the anger, the pain, the emptiness, the silence, helping each other rediscover life.

We have to learn to dream new dreams and hope new hopes, and it is here with the love and support of our new family of friends, that our journey begins.

Author Unknown

DOUBLE GRIEF

The death of my grandchild
And the grief of my son
Pull on my heart strings
And I am undone.

In secret I mourn beyond relief
For I have been given a double grief.
God, help me to deal with the pain and sorrow
Of living without the hope of tomorrow.

Andy Ciprian
Tallahassee FL

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new family of friends, that our journey begins.

Author Unknown