



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JANUARY 2014

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, Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone **on meeting evenings only** is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

- Jan 2 General Sharing & Death by Suicide
Parental & Siblings**
- Feb 6 General Sharing - Parental & Siblings**
- Fall 2015 Eastern PA Regional Conference**

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 (which we call love gifts) 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.**

If you donate to **United Way** at your place of work, and wish your contribution to go to the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, you may do so by entering: **The Compassionate Friends - Valley Forge Chapter United Way ID# 04-104.** on your pledge form.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: CHAPTER LEADER
RHONDA GOMEZ**

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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 MEMBERS

Chip Arena, son *Nicholas* (23)
Janet Higgins, son *Nicholas* (23)
Judith Zollers, son *Sam* (24)

REFRESHMENTS

Carole Bailey in memory of my son, *Matthew J. Bailey* on his anniversary 12/21.

Refreshments may be donated in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda (484) 919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table.

LOVE GIFTS

Bobbie Coyle Bailey in loving memory of my son, *Whitney Coyle* on his birthday 12/23.
Helen Deery in loving memory of my son, *Ronald Deery, Jr.* on his anniversary 12/20.
Rhonda & Frank Gomez in loving memory of our son, *Frank, Jr.* (30).
Patricia Anne & Lee Grossman in blessed memory of our daughter *Rachel Leah* on her anniversary 12/5.
Enid Irizarry in memory of my daughter, *Lisette M. Molina* on her anniversary 12/25.
Barbara Jacobs in loving memory of my daughter, *Pamela Faye* on her birthday 1/3.
Gwen & Dennis Kearns, Sr. in loving memory of our son, *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* (36).
Joan Kellett in loving memory of my son, *Danny*, on his birthday December 7th.
Melvin & Rhoda Kreiner, in loving memory of our daughter, *Anna Kreiner* on her 45th birthday.
John & Lillian Neff in loving memory of our son, *Patrick Neff* (30).
Mary Jane & Tom Poore in loving memory of our son, *Bradley Poore* (19).
Merrily & F. Harry Spiess, Jr. in memory of our son, *Ryan Spiess* & grandson, *Charles A. Smith*.
Priscilla Thoroughgood in honor of my daughter, *Kendra G. Enoch*
Happy Birthday Kendra. Never a day passes without my thinking of you and missing you terribly. Love Mother.
Debra Walters in loving memory of my son, *Evan* (20).

LOVE GIFTS IN MEMORY OF CHARLOTTE BODULICH

(passed away Nov. 19, 2013)

Peggy & Larry Way
Jerry & Anne Harrison

Joan E. & Bruce Harold
Carol Y. & David McClemens

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.**

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
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* 1/14
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Daniel J. Cornely* 1/28
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* 1/21
Emilie Degville, daughter *Madeline* 1/20
Abigail Figueroa, son *Jose C. Figueroa* 1/2
Sharon Hirst, son *Tom* 1/19
Joan Hornsby, daughter *Jackie* 1/30
Barbara Jacobs, daughter *Pamela Faye* 1/3
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* 1/18
Pat Kuchler, son *Michael* 1/23
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew* 1/29
John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Kaitlyn Logue* 1/19
Sharon Mallozzi, son *Anthony* 1/28
Kathleen & Hugh Martin, Jr., son *Colin John "C.J." Martin* 1/12
Linda Massey, son *Gene* 1/19
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* 1/23
Marian Melchiorre, grandson *John Anthony Peticca, Jr.* 1/6
Gerald & Margaret Milice, son *Gerald Milice* 1/28
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael* 1/27
Barbara Pearl, son *Jason Seth Pearl* 1/14
Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison* 1/3
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam* 1/27
Ruth Pluck, niece *Jackie* 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
Lynn & Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* 1/6
Linda Sciarra, son *John Anthony Peticca Jr.* 1/6
Gina Sebastianelli, brother *Tony Sebastianelli* 1/14

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

Barbara Smisko, daughter *Linda* 1/19
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* 1/24
Juan & Casey Terrero, son *Jalen* 1/29
Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas* 1/21
Weldon & Marie Tyson, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson* 1/22
Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen* 6/7
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* 1/3
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* 1/13

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* - 1/4
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David* - 1/11
Adriene & Peter De Moerloose, daughter *Olivia* - 1/26
Susan Dillman, daughter *Heather Lynne Dillman* - 1/19
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* - 1/20
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* - 1/31
Soph & Lige Grahn Jr, son *Richard Grahn* - 1/14
Robert & Kathleen Grossi, son *James Michael Grossi* - 1/28
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Byron 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
Tracey-Anne Langley, sister *Nataly* - 1/23
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
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
Felix & Shirley McShane, son *Brian* - 1/16
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy* - 1/11
Ashlie Nawrocki, sister *Chereen* - 1/9
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan* - 1/3
Jim & Bobbi O'Brien, daughter *Beth Hubbard* - 1/26

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Peggy O'Brien, son *Rick O'Brien* - 1/9
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* - 1/1
Thomas & Demetra Patukas, son *George Thomas Patukas* - 1/4
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* - 1/21
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
Andrea Rohloff, son *Jim* - 1/23
Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie* - 1/7
Bernice Scheinfeld, son *Richard Scheinfeld* - 1/26
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Scott Alan Rosenthal* - 1/3
Pat & Glen Smith, son *Chris* - 1/25
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* - 1/6
Gary Snyder, daughter *Alyse* - 1/3
Lorraine Spear, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear* - 1/30
Thomas & Sara Thiermann, daughter *Heather Bruce Thiermann* - 1/23
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* - 1/1
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* - 1/14
Pat Villante, daughter *Patty* - 1/30
Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen* - 1/6
Judi Zollers, son *Sam* - 1/20

OTHERS

When others forget, we remember.

We remember the birthdays and the anniversaries of their passing, no matter how many years have gone by.

We collectively are members of a fraternity (and sorority) that none of us wanted to join for the price of admission is way too great.

We call or email to say we're thinking of them on the 'special' day and to let them know their loved one is not forgotten.

We don't need to circle the date on the calendar, it is ingrained in our psyche as much as if it were our own.

When others ask, "aren't you over it yet?", we know the answer is, "no and never will be".

When others stammer, at a loss for words, we know a light touch or a hug speaks volumes.

When others helped us in our time of need, we pay it forward by helping others in need.

When we hear those trite cliches or stupid expressions of attempted compassion, we bite our tongues in muted silence.

When others ask, "how are you?" they really don't want to know, unless. . . unless they've walked in our shoes and know the pain.

When other forget, we remember, for we grieve with you.....

Michael Kanerin memory of my son, *Max*

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GRIEF AND THE NEW YEAR

Most of us have a new perspective about the New Year since our children or siblings have died. For some it is a relief to close the door on the year of our tragedy, and try to perceive the new year with small rays of hope. But, for others it was the last year we shared our life with our loved one, and can't bear to see that segment of our life close. Each of us view new seasons differently, for most of us it is a difficult time.

First of all we must allow ourselves to grieve, both privately and with other family members. We can't expect other family members to grieve exactly as we do. Each needs space to salve their own needs, which may be different than ours. We find it helps to set time aside for our grief. Perhaps, that is why going to Compassionate Friends meetings is so healing for many, where we devote the evening to dealing with our feelings, and hoping for suggestions from others who have "made it through".

It is important to take care of ourselves physically, for bad health can alter our mood, and how we respond to the daily happenings in our life. We need to be considerate of other family members, for they are also struggling to get their lives back together. Both kindness and antagonism will snowball, and return back to us. It helps to put all we possibly can into being kind and considerate to those around us. This does not mean taking abuse, or ignoring our own needs.

If a good hour, or day, comes our way, relish it, we deserved it. Sometimes this causes some guilt on our part. We must remember, the last thing our child or sibling would want, is for us to feel guilt for a moment of peace. The love we have for our children, is usually matched in return with love for us. So, I'm sure they are glad when we can have relief from the terrible torment we are going through.

We **must** try to see some good in the new year, and a reason to go on. When newly bereaved, it is difficult to even want to look for good things. Everything looks so trivial compared to our loss, for we are so depressed, and hurting so bad. For those of us who are further along in our grief well remember how difficult it is to believe anything about "getting better". We now know it does get tolerable, and you too, will make it through. You will not always be so miserable, it takes a lot of work to get there. Healing comes through sharing, crying, feeling guilty and angry, or any aspect of grief it takes for us to move forward.

We do grow through our grief, by becoming more loving, understanding, and compassionate to those around us. Most of us have refined our priorities, and have no time for trivial complaints of others, for we now know there are greater things in life to be concerned with. We have learned the true meaning of desperation, and know it comes from broken people, not broken appliances.

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

**I cannot see your face, but my heart holds the sound of your voice
And the soft brightness which is your soul. *Amy Lowell* "The Touch of You"**

THE BEREAVED MARRIAGE

Before the death of a child, in an intact marriage both contribute to a mutually satisfying relationship. The following are areas of sharing before the death and where lack of sharing occurs afterwards.

Before, in family activities, couples shared what happened during the day, etc. After the death, they may have an initial sharing regarding the funeral and everything relating to the child, but not to them as a couple. Emotional support was a balancing act before the death. Often there is no emotional support afterwards, because each is so wrapped up in individual grief. People in grief become introspective - a typical thought is how am I going to go on? Before the death there was mutual concern for each other's well-being; afterwards the concern is turned inward. While before the death there was interest in each other's work, hobbies, and activities, afterwards nothing has meaning.

Males deal with grief differently from females because they are expected to be strong emotionally, to not show emotion, to not cry after the funeral. Society does not allow males to show anger over the death. As providers, men go back to work soon after and are away from where the memories are. They do not have as much time to think about what happened. As protectors, they may be feeling guilt. "Have I failed to protect my child in some way?" Also, there may be a feeling of wanting to protect the spouse by not being too emotional, by being "strong."

Men are more self-sufficient, especially in the emotional area. Men are not likely to share very well; this hurts their ability to grieve. Men hurt as much as women do, but usually do not show it until something triggers it. A man may talk about many things like sports and politics, but rarely is there someone with whom he can share his feelings. Men escape to the job, to outside activities. It is hard to find someone with whom to share feelings. Men do not usually recognize that it is all right to feel depressed.

Society says it is all right for a woman to cry and to talk about the loss. Women usually have a network with other women, although some of those making up the network may drop the woman because of not being able to face what has happened. Women set the tone for the family. When in grief, her responses set the tone for the family atmosphere and can be devastating. Because women are the primary child-caring persons, the mother may be the one feeling guilty because she had responsibility for the child's everyday care. Women are given more prescriptions for tranquilizers than men because of doctors' attitudes.

How do couples reconcile these variables? What can they do to lessen the impact? Men should take it easy regarding outside activities. Emphasis should be placed on getting into the business of grieving, even isolating oneself at times to be able to grieve. Men should find someone with whom to talk, preferably another bereaved father. Don't choose a woman because a man is too vulnerable emotionally and an unhealthy situation could develop. Men are "shaky" on accepting a group experience. If anger is what a man feels, he should express it by channeling it into something physical - be angry at something, not at a person. Daily exercise that is appropriate for the individual is another way of channeling aggression. Men should make a concerted effort to learn how to cry. Crying is a natural response; tear ducts have a natural purpose. Find a catalyst - a photo of your child, an article of clothing - anything that will make you cry. No one else need know about the crying if you go into another room. Some men find it takes much time before they feel free to cry, but once they do, it is then easier to continue to cry in private.

The woman in the bereaved couple should remember that she needs friends, especially other bereaved mothers. She should schedule time away from her job if she is a working mother, if nothing more than a flexible coffee break schedule. Non-working mothers should use a baby sitter and plan time away from the usual environment. It is vital to nurture yourself. Physical exercise helps overcome depression and anger. Ask for help if you need it. If someone says, "What can I do?" give them something to do - shop, baby sit, clean house, write notes, something that will help you; it will also be good for the volunteer.

Until a death occurs, husband and wife behavior patterns within a family are predictable; afterwards, they are different. In the new husband-wife relationships don't try too much too fast. Drop expectations; be patient with each other. Respect how the other grieves and his timetable for doing it; no two people grieve exactly the same way or at the same pace.

If one spouse does not show grief, it does not mean memories are forgotten. Spend time together even if you have to schedule it. Each spouse is a reminder of the loss; for this reason they may even avoid each other. There may be feelings of guilt for allowing yourself to feel good when your child is dead. Therefore, resume slowly and with patience. It is important to be able to say, "I am angry about what happened to our child, but it does not mean I love you any less."

*Adapted from an article by
Bill and Barbara Schatz - TCF, Bothell, WA*

QUIET TIME

An important way to push stress out of your life is to take advantage of quiet time. Choose a time when you can be alone with your thoughts and feelings. Sound scary? Read on...

There is a tendency to run from the pain of grief – to keep so busy and push yourself so hard that all you can do is fall in bed at night and go right to sleep. You may keep from feeling the pain, but it will catch up with you in some form in the future. It may be in the form of a disabling disease, frequent colds, a sudden heart attack or grief in years to come.

Stop and...open up the picture album and remember times past.

Take a walk where there were special memories. Sit down during the day and reflect.

At the beginning of these quiet times you may have a rush of feelings. Feel them. You won't break, and nobody has ever cried forever. Once you have gone into them, you will eventually begin to quiet down. At this time you could play some quiet music or put on a tape with some relaxing sounds, such as ocean waves or gentle rainfall.

Rest when you can. During this time your body is trying very hard to heal your emotional wounds and you may tire easily. Take a nap in the middle of the day. Yes, even at your place of work if possible. When I returned to work the week after my son's death, I found a couch in one of the women's rest rooms. I would curl up under a velveteen blanket for about 20 minutes after lunch. That helped me get through the rest of the day. Plus, it was the only place I could have a good, private cry in that kind of environment.

It's very common to have sleeping difficulties. Grievors frequently have trouble getting to sleep or wake during the night and are unable to go back to sleep. You have a lot on your mind, and it's hard to turn it off.

If you're having trouble sleeping at night, try the following tips before resorting to sleeping pills. Some medicines ward off your feelings so that when you stop taking them, it's as if your grief just begun.

- get out of bed if you wake up and can't go back to sleep within 10 minutes. Stop fighting wakefulness and do something else for a while.
 - don't make yourself sleep in a bed which has memories if it's too difficult, or put a pillow where the empty spot is. George Burns found comfort sleeping in his wife's bed after she died. A widow found comfort in wearing her husband's pajama top and laying on his side of the bed.
 - have a good book or magazine handy to read.
 - keep your journal next to your bed and write out your thoughts and feelings.
 - watch TV or read.
 - drink warm milk. It has a chemical which helps bring on sleep.
 - listen to relaxation cassette tapes, such as ocean waves or whale sounds. If you have never tried them you'll be surprised at how soothing they are.
 - play an affirmation tape.
- Or, if you're a snuggler, just rest in bed, not "trying" to go to sleep. Enjoy the soft feel of your pillow, the cuddliness of your mattress and covers.

Give yourself the gift of time out, awake or sleeping.

Kelly Osmont, TCF S. Chester Co., PA

**COURAGE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEAR AND PAIN,
BUT THE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE DESPITE FEAR AND PAIN.**

Rabbi Earl Grollman

TO MY BIG BROTHER

EACH LIFE AFFECTS ANOTHER'S

You were the best big brother.
 You were such a true true friend.
 You were someone to whom I could always
 talk and always could depend.

Its hard to believe that you are not here.
 Smiling, laughing ... Oh, I feel a tear.

I think back on many times gone by
 and I just keep asking myself, why?
 But, it makes me smile and it makes me laugh.
 To think back on sweet memories of the past.

Moving up from Osborne Street
 and joining a new school.
 Greg and Grant were always there
 even when we joined the pool.

Then we went off to Ocean City
 to spend our summers at the shore.
 The sand would drift the ocean roll
 and the gulls would often soar.

I watched you go through LaSalle,
 and then off to Penn State too.
 I was your little sister
 who was so very proud of you.

I think of you quite often.
 For your thoughts I'd give a penny.
 Did you know I had a son last year.
 I know he'd love his uncle Denny.

You'll be with me forever.
 And although we are apart.
 You live forever in my memories
 and always in my heart.

Kimberly Kearns Minetola, Phila., PA
 for her brother, **Dennis Kearns, Jr.**

We may not always realize that everything we do
 Affects not only our lives but touches others, too.
 A single happy smile can always brighten up the
 day

for anyone who happens by.
 And a little bit of thoughtfulness that shows
 someone you care,
 Creates a ray of sunshine for both of you to share.

Yes, every time you offer someone a helping hand,
 Every time you show a friend you care and under-
 stand.

Every time you have a kind and gentle word to
 give,
 You help someone find beauty in this precious
 life we live,

For happiness brings happiness,
 and loving ways bring love,
 And giving is the treasure
 that contentment is made of.

Author Unknown

I'M TIRED OF BEING STRONG

“Forgive me Lord, but I’m tired of being some of
 the things I’ve tried so hard to be ... I’m tired of
 being so capable, so efficient. I’m tired of the
 compliment, ‘You are such a strong person, I ad-
 mire your strength’. I’m tired of being considered
 so patient and understanding that people dump
 their troubles on me. I’m tired of being so cheer-
 ful. I want to be free to be cross and complain and
 not get a ‘buck up, old chap’ routine. I’m tired of
 being considered so independent, so strong.
 Sometimes, at least sometimes, Lord, I want to be
 weak and helpless, able to lean on somebody, able
 to cry and be comforted. Lord, I guess there are
 just times when I want to be a child again, running
 to climb on my mother’s lap.”

Marjorie Holmes “Hold Me Up a Little”

I cannot carry this burden alone. The road is too steep, and the pain too great. I shall only get to the top of the hill if I am able to lean on a firm shoulder whose strength lies in the reality of the feet which bear its weight. The **sharing** of grief is the only solution to the crisis that surrounds bereavement in our age. To share a person's sorrow is to accept their reality, and to acknowledge the fact that none of us is immune from death.

Excerpt - DEATH COMES HOME by Simon Steven

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

"And a little child shall lead them" ---
He has, she has, they have, they all have.
Our children have led us to this gathering of friends.
At the beginning of this new experience, we were like children.
We had to learn to stand again, we had to learn to walk again.
We had to learn to walk one step at a time.
We stand, we fall, we stand again.
We try to stand alone, and we keep falling.
We reach for support -- we stand a little longer!
We reach for a hand - we learn to walk!
But, remember, my friend,
Just like a little child,
We must learn to walk ... one step at a time
We are lucky.
We reached for Compassionate Friends.
We need not walk alone.
There is always a hand to help us, each step of the way ...
Along the road of healing.

Tina Goodale, Brien's Mom Valley Forge, PA

AN ANGEL'S KISS

I believe I felt an angel gently kiss my cheek today
While lost in daydreams once again I saw us both at play.

Breathe as warm as a summer breeze, moist as morning dew
Was it just a wishful thought, or a gift from God and you?

Was that hushed sound falling leaves or a thousand other things
Perhaps it was just the sweet sound of fluttering Angel's wings.

I felt a fire rekindle, deep within my heart
A feeling I had not known since we've been apart.

I felt my pain and sorrow begin to ease away
As a little sun light broke through the sky of gray.

I may always wonder, but I am always grateful too
Because these are the things that help to get us through.

I may never know what happened, or just what words to say
Except that in my heart, I believe, my angel, I felt your kiss today.

Ed Young - Delaware county, TCF

PLEASE ASK

Someone asked me about you today,
It's been so long since anyone has done that.
It felt so good to talk about you
...to share my memories of you
...to simply say your name out loud.
She asked me if I minded talking about what happened
to you or would it be too painful to speak of it.
I told her I think of it everyday and speaking about it
helps me to release the tormented thoughts whirling
around in my head.
She said she never realized the pain would last this long.
She apologized for not asking sooner.
I told her, "Thanks for asking."
I don't know if it was curiosity or concern that made her
ask, but I told her,
Please do it again sometime soon."

Barbara Taylor Hudson POMC, Cincinnati, OH

SILENT 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 - hurts.

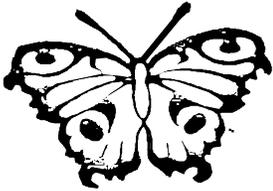
Verna Smith TCF, Ft. Worth, TX



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Chapter Leaders
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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 helpless 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.

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