

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

MARCH 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

- Mar 4 General Sharing
Death by Suicide
- April 6 General Sharing PLEASE NOTE THIS IS THE FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH see page 3
- July 2-4 33rd National Conference, Arlington, VA
(see page 3)

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
ANN MURRAY or RHONDA GOMEZ**



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NEW FRIENDS

Tracy Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* DOD 12/5/09

Dave Bonga, daughter *Amanda* DOD 12/31/09

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.

FEBRUARY REFRESHMENTS

Nina Bernstein, in memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* on his birthday

Ben Breskman, in memory of my son, *Brian* (19)

Marie & Ken Hofmockel, in memory of our son, *Douglas* on his 28th death 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

Nina Bernstein, in memory of my beloved son *Andrew Voluck* (20) for library books.

Harold & Marcia Epstein, in memory of our grandson *Andrew Voluck* (20)

Jack & Freda Gross, in memory of our beloved daughter *Linda Joy Gross* on the anniversary of her passing Feb 25th and for the joy she brought us on her birth Dec 1961.

Shirley & Phillip C. Kennedy in loving memory of our son *Phillip V. Kennedy* on his 40th birthday

Audrey Morasco, in memory of my son *Christopher Morasco* on anniversary of passing Dec 27th

Sheldon & Joan Plam in loving memory of our cherished son *Michael Tobiah Plam* on his 34th birthday.

Raymond & Marguerite Poshuszny in loving memory of our son *Alex Posluszny* (57)

United Way of Central & NE Connecticut

Acme Rebate Program

Thanks to all those who have been supporting this program.

This is an easy way to raise funds for our chapter.

We have few who are supporting this project.

We are hoping that more of you will take the time to send in your receipts.

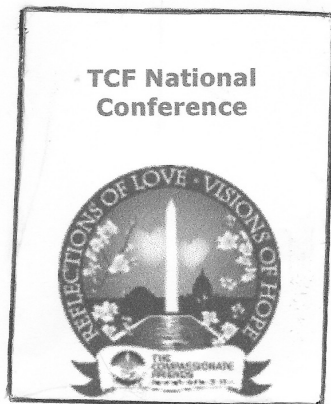
Please forward register receipts to Marie & Ken Hofmockel (see address on page 1).

TCF - VALLEY FORGE APRIL MEETING DATE CHANGE

Our April meeting date conflicts with Good Shepherd Church's Maundy Thursday service on April 8th. We have rescheduled our TCF meeting for **Tuesday, April 6th** at 7:45PM.

TCF 33rd NATIONAL CONFERENCE - ARLINGTON, VA

July 2, 7:30AM - July 4, 11:30AM



"Reflections of Love, Visions of Hope" is the theme of The Compassionate Friends 33rd National Conference which will be held in Arlington, Virginia July 2-4, 2010. The event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City. The conference will feature a Candle Lighting Service on Saturday evening, and a Walk to Remember on Sunday. Many well-known speakers will give you a week end of healing. They will address the Opening Session, Friday & Saturday evening after banquets, and the Sunday closing. There will be time for one-on-one sharing with our TCF families

There will be over 100 workshops for parents, siblings, grandparents, and for those who have no surviving children. . You will find a hospitality room, a reflection room, the Butterfly Boutique, and a book store. There will be a memory board to place a picture of your loved one. There will be many friends that are waiting to meet you. We hope you will plan to attend. The conference is within driving distance and car pooling.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE BY PHONE. Please call 1-800-233-1234 or 1-703-418-1234, identify yourself as a Compassionate Friend attending the conference to get a reduced nightly rate of \$129 + tax per room for one or two guests, \$154 per room for three guests, and \$179 per room for four guests.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE ON THE TCF NATIONAL WEBSITE. www.compassionatefriends.org. Then go to events, click on National Conference. From there you can click on Hyatt Regency Crystal City to make your reservation.

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@hybridpoplars.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.**

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Dardozi, son *James Dardozi* 3/7
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* 3/29
Richard & Martha Fenoglio, daughter *Judith Fenoglio Daw* 3/30
Nick & Fran Fioravanti, son *Nicholas J. Fioravanti, Jr.* 3/24
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* 3/26
Lisa Foos, son *Curtis* 3/14
Kenneth Frantz, son *Kenneth Frantz, Jr.* 3/20
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* 3/20
Marco & Patricia Giubilato, daughter *Robin Giubilato Zarelli* 3/18
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* 3/25
Margaret C Jones, son *Christopher* 3/17
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* 3/11
William & Margaret Lang, son *Michael J. Leib* 3/15
Donna Leathers, son *Brandon* 3/16
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* 3/17
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* 3/22
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* 3/9
Tom & Charmaine Malik, son *Danny Malik* 3/3
Jeff and Kathy McCarron, daughter *Sarah* 3/30
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* 3/11
Paul & Jackie Mimless, daughter *Stephanie* 3/20
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/18
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Willamson* 3/8
Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake* 3/27
Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J* 3/27
Raymond & Marguerite Posluszny, son *Alex Posluszny* 3/22
Lyla T. Poulson, daughter *Kimberly Poulson* 3/4
Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* 3/5
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* 3/24
Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* 3/26
Lisa and John Russo, son *Casey* 3/17
Bonnie Russo, son *Matthew* 3/29
Susan & John Rutland, son *Justin Rutland* 3/28
Carol Sannella, son *David Sannella* 3/18
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Christopher Harvey* 3/5
brother *Jake* 3/27

MARCH BIRTHDAYS continued

Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* 3/9
Phyllis Sisenwine, daughter *Jill* 3/12
Jill Smith, son *Andrew Jensen* 3/21
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* 3/25
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* 3/5
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* 3/18
Dorothy Washington, daughter *Michele Washington* 3/2
Theresa Wigand, daughter *Dawn* 3/7

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua, son **Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua** - 3/27
Marvin & Wilma Bordetsky, daughter **Noreen Bordetsky Cook** - 3/24
Rose Marie Cote, son **Mark J. Cote** - 3/26
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver, brother **Mark Cote** - 3/26
Robert Dilbeck, son **Daniel Dilbeck** - 3/25
Linda DiPasquale, son **Thomas** - 3/24
Tom & Irene Edmunds, son **Kyle Derek Edmunds** - 3/17
Ronald J. & Margaret Halas, daughter **Desiree A. Halas** - 3/11
Othell & William Heaney, son **Kevin** - 3/10
Brad Ingerman, son **Justin** - 3/18
Michael & Betsy Jarrett, son **Michael Jarrett** - 3/10
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter **Danelle Rossi** - 3/12
Marcia Kling, son **CJ** - 3/13
Susan Lipson, nephew **Justin Ingerman** - 3/18
Elaine & James Madden, son **Andrew Madden** - 3/6
Lorelei Malandra, brother **Jeff Singer** - 3/9
Dan Markle, brother **Matt Markle** - 3/3
Anne McClenachan, brother **Andy McClenachan** - 3/30
Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter **Renee Meisenhelder** - 3/2
Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter **Kim** - 3/3
Beth Mohr, brother **Matthew Bock** - 3/16
Ann Murray, son **Brian Rapoport** - 3/9
Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son **Richard H. Owens, Jr.** - 3/26
Michele Paul, sister **Desiree Halas** - 3/11
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son **Bradley Poore** - 3/19
Becky Rotkowski, brother **Brian** - 3/14
Judy & Lin Schleicher, daughter **Quinna Marie Schleicher** - 3/10
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son **Jeffrey Vincent Singer** - 3/9
James & Betty Treichler, son **James Treichler Jr.** - 3/13
Peggy Tweed, son **Matthew Bock** - 3/16
Emma Valenteen, daughter **Marianne Valenteen** - 3/19
Linda Weaver, son **Damon Weaver** - 3/18
Laurie Wyche, son **Jameson Wyche** - 3/1

SHARED THOUGHTS ON HEALING, BUT NEVER FORGETTING

We lost our son, Doug, 28 years ago. I did not run away from anything. I met it all head-on, but all the while, feeling the intensity of the pain would last a lifetime. **I did my grief work**, I shared my grief with most anyone who wanted to listen. (probably with some who did not want to listen) After a while, I noticed I did not have the need to speak of my grief, and could find healing in listening to, and trying to salve other's pain. This played a big role in my becoming functional again. For the most part, my life is enjoyable and filled with anticipation and looking for a tomorrow.

The one thing I cannot get past is feeling the pain for the newly bereaved. Because I have "been there" their pain becomes my pain. Several years ago our steering committee decided it would be beneficial for those attending a Compassionate Friends meeting for the first time, to meet separately. Having previously talked to most of these people by phone, gave me some insight on their background, therefore I seemed the logical one to facilitate this group.

This was a very good experience for me. It reiterated that we heal, but we don't forget. Perhaps the remembering is what gives us compassion and the desire to reach out to those hurting so badly. Much of the devastation of our loss is the same for all of us, the deep depression, anger, guilt, no interest in life around us, "going over the edge", worry about losing another, crying, can't cry, marital deterioration, unable to fulfill obligations with our family and work situations. I so want to make them better **now**, teach them to love again (particularly themselves), restore their faith in their supreme being, help them sort grief from true marital problems, and tell them we have all felt like we were going over the edge (but didn't).

It seems so little to offer, "your feelings are normal, you will get better, and become functional again". If the newly bereaved could **truly believe** these words, then I guess that is a **lot** to offer. But I feel most of them are saying "you don't know how deep I have fallen in the pit" and this transition could never happen to me. (This was my reaction in the early stages) Believe me, we know where the bottom is, we've been there. We can learn to smile again; we can even learn to live again, once we have let go of some of the pain. Be patient, this doesn't happen soon. If it has not been long enough for you to see progress, look at those at The Compassionate Friends meetings, who have moved ahead in their grief. They didn't love any less, they have not forgotten how intense your pain can be, and they are just in a different place in their grief. Many have stayed to help you through your loss; their very presence says its possible to survive.

They are healing, but never forgetting.

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

DEATH IS NOTHING AT ALL

Death is nothing at all.
I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I, and you are you,
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.
Call me by my old familiar name.
Speak to me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.
Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the
household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without effort,
without the ghost of a shadow in it.
Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as it ever was.

There is absolute and unbroken continuity.
What is death but a negligible accident?
Why should I be out of mind
because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,
somewhere very near, just round the corner.
All is well.
Nothing is past; nothing is lost.
One brief moment and all will be as it was
before.
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting
when we meet again!

Cannon Henry Scott Holland
(1847 - 1918)

Submitted by **Ann Murray**
in memoriam of my son ***Brian Rapoport***
12/1983 - 3/2001

IN MEMORIAM

I'm wishing desperately against time
to that summer place where the future seemed to sprawl endless before us,
beckoning,
"come dance in my hours and lounge about in my days"
and for a time we did
Oh what I would give to have you stand before me once more, carefree and invincible
and you could just smile away all my tears
But even to this I can hear your reply
I'm going to have to forge ahead atop the world's misleading promises with only
A picture of you hanging in my heart.
How will I survive on just memories?

It feels like goodbye, doesn't it?
because it is here that our paths unwind
and here that we as mortals have lost each other
but we have lost each other only as mortals
Because the future is alive with your spirit
and the promise of your smile beaming before me
rather than upon me.

Jessica Knoll
A friend of Brian Rapoport
and his classmate at Shipley

Tread gently near
the tender souls
who've lost a child,
whose hearts are
bruised and bleeding;
for healing comes slowly,
with pain in every
forward step,
tears in every
backward look.

So much love still flows
for that special one --
arms reach out to hold
and back to cling,
but reach forward
only numbly,
fearful of forgetting
or being disloyal
by going on.

There is guilt
in laughing
feeling pleasure,
even being alive.
There are questions
longings, heartaches.

But slowly, surely,
strength and healing come,
in God's own time --
not as answer,
nor as forgetting,
but as acceptance
that this pain, this loss,
is ours to live with
and somehow,
by God's grace,
to us to bless!

Joan Splettstoesser - TCF Pike's Peak

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

EVERYTHING IS A FIRST

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me -- NEVER! The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality. FORGET? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere -- love and concern were translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say -- nothing is NORMAL.

Tragedy has brought a seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this. People ask me, "How are you?" Here is my answer; "I am mad, Dave died at the age of 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be strong"

Lisa Ann Jones, Avoca, PA

*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

A LETTER TO MY BROTHER

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer.

How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near?

Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you, I think of you everyday and feel you in my heart always.

Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness.

I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holeman Tuscaloosa, AL TCF



You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that come along." The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must try to do the thing you think you cannot do.

Eleanor Roosevelt

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 admire 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 cheerful. 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”

HOW SELFISH

How selfish we who live can be
when loved ones pass away
we cry and mourn the things undone
and words we didn’t say

There are no birthday candles
just many silent tears
and though we know you’re happy
we feel the loss of years

Instead I guess we need to think
how lucky we have been
and thank God for life and time to know
a brother, son or friend
Still, death for those now left behind
is quite a painful thing
and only time and memories
can help to ease the sting

So quickly you were taken
one cold and lonely night
and the pain was just as sharp
when morning shed it’s light

gone but not forgotten
we speak of you with tears
and happy birthday,
our young man
we’ve missed you these two years

That sun has set without you
and the moon still casts a glow
but our hearts would feel much lighter
if only you could know

How much we really miss you
and the love we still feel, too
we’ll never forget you - - Raymond
Happy Birthday to you

Jeannette England, TCF, Baltimore, MD

GRIEF IS A GREAT TEACHER when it
sends us back to serve and bless the living.
We learn how to counsel and comfort those
who, like ourselves, are bowed with sorrow.
We learn when to keep silence in their
presence, and when a word will assure
them of our love and concern.

**The Healing Began when a
friend embraced me, leaving
some of his tears on my cheek.**

Author unknown

from *GATES OF PRAYER*
reform Judaism Prayer Book

THE PATHWAY OF TEARS ... TO THE HAPPINESS OF MY MEMORIES

I walk in turmoil, I walk in peace.
I walk in loneliness, I walk with love.
I walk in sadness, I walk in happiness.
I dwell in the depths of despair, yet soar to the ecstasy of beyond.
I dwell in the shadows of darkness, yet strive for the light afar.
I feel the emptiness, the pain, the grief, the heavy grief
Yet search for the splendor of butterflies and the glory of rainbows.
I feel trampled and wasted and without cause.
I feel nothing.
I feel the love of memories overflowing within me.
I feel the warmth of his smile, his touch, his kiss, his arms around me, his innocence.
I remember the hurt, the misunderstanding, the alienation, the darkness, the
bleakness, the hopelessness, the devastation.
I remember his love, his caring, the scent of his hair, the touch of his hand, the little
boy playing in the sun.

And I remember the family I found who understood when no other wanted to understand.
I remember the guilt, the tears, the anger and hostility, the inability to carry on, to forgive,
to laugh again.

And I remember the family of Compassionate Friends who allowed that multitude of
feelings to flow, to surface and to happen, thus finally allowing me to forgive, to live again,
to smile again, to let happiness override unhappiness.

I thank my Nathan for his lessons of love, for his ability to see the beauty and life, in all
creatures, great and small.
I thank that little boy for his warmth, his sunshine, his gentleness, his wisdom, his innocence.
And I thank The Compassionate Friends for their patience, their understanding, and love,
their acceptance.

I know that as long as I live I will remember, sometimes I will hurt, I will ache and I
will weep in remembering.

Do we ever really let go? I doubt that it is possible to ever let go of that precious part of
ourselves that has ceased to be. That is how it is - in spite of ourselves, and despite
anyone else's beliefs.

Remember, remember the happiness of memories.
Remember the sadness, the tears of memories.
Remember always our children of the past; they dwell in the present of our hearts forever.
AND TRUE LOVE NEVER REALLY ENDS...