

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

General Sharing March 5th at 7:45
p.m.

General Sharing April 2nd at 7:45
p.m.



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.

If you donate to the 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.

Please make all checks Payable to:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
Send to Rhonda Gomez

March 2020

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Compassionatefriends.org

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

Jill & Richard Reich Their son **Nicholas** (24)

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

Sue Lawlor In memory of my son **Jim Sinha** 2/17

Fred & Irene Sutton in memory of our son **Jim Sutton** 4/16

Rose Cote In memory of my son **Mark Cote** 3/26

Nina Bernstein In memory of my son **Andrew** 2/9

Arthur and Nancy Singer in loving memory of **Jeffrey Vincent Singer** 3/9

A SEARCH FOR A CURE

There is an old Chinese tale about the woman whose only son died. In her grief she went to the holyman and said, "What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?" Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, "Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your life." The woman set off at once in search of the magical mustard seed.

She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked at the door, and said. "I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this such a place? It is very important to me." They told her, "you've certainly come to the wrong place" and began to describe all the tragic things that had recently befallen them. The woman said to herself, "Who is better able to help these poor unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune of my own? She stayed to comfort them, then went on in her search for a home that had never known sorrow. But wherever she turned, in hovels and in palaces, she found one tale after another of sadness and misfortune. Ultimately, she became so involved in ministering to other people's grief that she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had in fact driven the sorrow out of her life.

Author unknown

NOT GUILT, REGRET

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us. Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt - we feel regret. *Kitty Sanders, Nashville*

WHEN TOMORROW STARTS WITHOUT ME

When tomorrow starts without me,
and I'm not there to see;
If the sun should rise and find your eyes,
all filled with tears for me;
I wish so much you wouldn't cry,
the way you did today,
while thinking of the many things,
we didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me,
as much as I love you,
and each time that you think of me,
I know you'll miss me too;
But when tomorrow starts without me,
please try to understand,
that an Angel came and called my name,
and took me by the hand,
and said my place was ready,
in heaven far above,
and that I'd have to leave behind,
all those I dearly love.

But as I turned to walk away,
a tear fell from my eye,
for all my life, I'd always thought,
I didn't want to die.
I had so much to live for,
so much yet to do,
it seemed almost impossible,
that I was leaving you.

I thought of all the yesterdays,
the good ones and the bad,
I thought of all the love we shared,
and all the fun we had.
If I could relive yesterday,
just even for awhile,
I'd say goodbye and kiss you
and maybe see you smile.

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

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

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

He said, "This is eternity,
and all I've promised you".
Today for life on earth is past,
but here it starts anew.
I promise no tomorrow,
but today will always last,
and since each day's the same day,
there's no longing for the past.

But you have been so faithful,
so trusting and so true.
Though there were times
you did some things,
you knew you shouldn't do.
But you have been forgiven
and now at last you're free.
So won't you take my hand
and share my life with me?

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

David M Romano

THE DEATH OF A CHILD

It has been observed that the social support we receive during our bereavement is the most important fact to help us cope with our loss. We generally receive this support from our natural environment – our friends, family, fellow church members, co-workers, clergy and others who occupy a place within our world. Many parents perceive their support system as strong and loving and gracious in the beginning.

For society reacts strongly to the death of a child. Yet society is so threatened by the death of a young person that it moves quickly to protect itself. Parents often feel isolated or abandoned by those who could provide solace and comfort. Many parents express the need to “be understood” but this understanding is usually unavailable. Instead, people sometimes respond from their own anxieties and their own needs, admonishing parents to “be brave,” “get on with your life,” “have another child,” or “try not to think about it.” In effect, do anything except remind us that this wretched thing can happen.

The unrealistic expectations of society and the insensitive comments made to bereaved parents can further complicate the already complicated process of mourning the loss of a child. Reminding ourselves that people don’t mean to be cruel, that they are speaking from their own fears does little to help. Society’s expectation that grief following child loss will follow the pattern of other losses is another hurtful folly. As bereaved parents, our grief is unique. The intensity and duration is different. Even if our support system doesn’t recognize these realities, bereaved mother and father must.

WHAT HELPS?

*Understand that the death of a child is a unique loss, that you may well require a longer time to grieve, and longer recovery period.

*Accept the reality that “accepting the reality” is difficult because the reality is so untimely and unnatural. Yet know that accepting the fact that your child has died is an essential part of the process.

*Beware that each family member will grieve differently. Treasure the moments of sharing that do come, but understand that each must also grieve

alone and in their own way and at their own pace.

*Develop a clear understanding that the intense emotional pain you are feeling is normal. We often need assurance that what we are feeling is not indicative of mental illness.

*Obtain as much explanation and understanding of the death as possible.

*Remember that good communication and mutual support between the parents is essential. Good communication means listening and talking.

*Recognize that few people will comprehend or understand the depth of your sorrow. No amount of explaining will help. You cannot explain parental loss to someone. That does not mean they don’t care. It simply means that the pain is such that it can be experienced but never fully explained.

*Understand that if some of your friends stay away, it may be because they feel awkward. You may have to reach out to them.

*Draw on your religious faith. Even if it seems fragile for the moment, understand that faith is often stronger after a deep struggle.

*Hold onto the thought that while you will never forget, while there will always be an emptiness, the pain will dim with time. While you will never say “good-bye” to your child, you will be able to say “good-bye” to the worst of the pain.

*Join a support group where grief can be shared with other bereaved parents. Give the group experience a fair chance by attending at least three meetings.

*Memorialize the life of your child in a way that will be meaningful to you and your family.

Sue Holtkamp, Ph.D.

Excerpted from When the Bough Breaks

The Death of a Child

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

Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua - son - Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua - 3/27

Loretta Bovell - daughter - JoAnna - 3/7

Joann (D) & Gary Chavez - wife - JoAnn Chavez - 38/31

Rose Marie Cote - son - Mark J. Cote - 3/26

Barbara Cotteta - granddaughter - Denise - 3/28

Joanne Devito - grandson - Domenico - 3/21

Linda DiPasquale - son - Thomas - 3/24

Michelle Dozier - son - Eric McCoy - 3/31

Ginny Ebert - son - Jason - 3/25

Tom & Irene Edmunds - son - Kyle Derek Edmunds - 3/17

Bob & Dena Filipone - daughter - Denise - 3/8

Kate Gara - godchild - Colin - 3/13

Rita Gibbons - son - Paul Gibbons - 3/20

Herb & Karen Grant - son - Ryan - 3/8

Ronald J. & Margaret Halas - daughter - Desiree A. Halas - 3/11

Othell & William Heaney - son - Kevin Heaney - 3/10

Michael & Betsy Jarrett - son - Michael Jarrett - 3/10

Joan Kellett - grandson - Keith Mastronardo - 4/29

Jacquie Kilroy - son - Shilen Kenneth - 3/21

Suellen & Stephen King - daughter - Danelle Rossi - 3/12

Kevin & Janet Landis - son - Daniel - 3/13

Susan Lipson - nephew - Justin Ingerman - 3/18

Stacy Ludy - daughter - Alyssa Kenny - 3/10

Ella Mack - sister - Elizabeth - 3/23

Lorelei Malandra - brother - Jeff Singer - 3/9

Dan Markle - brother - Matt Markle - 3/3

Shannon Mastronardo - son - Keith - 3/19

Anne McClenachan - brother - **Andy McClenachan** - 3/30
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey - son - **Michael** - 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
George & Estelle Null - daughter - **Kathleen "Kathy" Null** - 3/7
Betty & Richard Owens, Sr. - son - **Richard H. Owens, Jr.** - 3/26
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore - son - **Bradley Poore** - 3/19
Kelly Rossi - brother - **Kevin** - 3/8
Becky Rotkowski - brother - **Brian** - 3/14
Beverly & Joe Rush - daughter - **Kelsey** - 3/29
Arthur & Nancy Singer - son - **Jeffrey Vincent Singer** - 3/9
Melissa Toland - son - **Connor Shepherd** - 3/17
Akhil & Judy Tripathi - son - **Sunil** - 3/17
Peggy Tweed - son - **Matthew Bock** - 3/16
Hans & Margaret van Naerssen - son - **Eric** - 3/25
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver - brother - **Mark Cote** - 3/26
Laurie Wyche - son - **Jameson Wyche** - 3/1



BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Dardozzi - son - **James Dardozzi** - 3/7
Anne DeMaio grand-son - **Domenico DeVito** - 3/7
Joe & Germaine DePiano - son - **Luke** - 3/27
Joanne Devito grand-son - **Domenico** - 3/7
Janie & Joseph Dougherty - son - **Brendan K. Dougherty** - 3/29
Robert & Lee Duffield - son - **Michael Robin** - 3/31
Richard & Martha Fenoglio - daughter - **Judith Fenoglio Daw** - 3/30
Sarah Fishel - daughter - **Allyson** - 3/26
Bill & Karen Flavin - son - **Chad Flavin** - 3/7
Lisa Foos - son - **Curtis** - 3/14
Kate Gara - godchild - **Colin** - 3/27
Jo Ann Gatlin - daughter - **Lisa Diane Gatlin** - 3/20

BIRTHDAYS- CONTINUATION



Marco & Patricia Giubilato - daughter - Robin Giubilato Zarelli - 3/18

Danielle & Joshua Graham - brother - Jake - 3/27

Elizabeth Haney - son - Christian - 3/6

Jack & Stacy Kabic - daughter - Brithy - 3/29

Elida Kauffman - son - Daniel - 3/9

Joan Kellett grand- son - Keith Mastronardo - 3/23

Gloria and Jerry Koval - son - Steven - 3/11

Terry Kozlewski - son - Frankie - 3/12

TraceyAnne Langley - Sister - Nataly - 3/25

Julie Lauderback - son - Donovan Lauderback - 3/5

Vivian & Kenneth Maahs - daughter - Kirsten - 3/22

Lorelei Malandra - brother - Jeff Singer - 3/9

Tom & Charmaine Malik - son - Danny Malik - 3/3

Shannon Mastronardo - son - Keith - 3/23

Lee & Laurie Maxwell - son - Dan - 3/14

Jeff & Kathy McCarron - daughter - Sarah - 3/30

William & Carol Meehan - son - Patrick W. Meehan - 3/11

Greg and Mary Miller - son - David - 3/26

Beth Mohr - brother - Matthew Bock - 3/18

John Mscisz - grandson - Liam John Willam- son - 3/8

Aminah Na'im - son - Dawann - 3/3

Kimberly Newman - mother - Margaret Haffey - 3/3

Marie O'Connon - son - Curran J - 3/27

Maureen O'hara Munoz - daughter - Teresa - 3/27

Janet Patrizio - son - Stephen - 3/12

Terri Pfeiffer - son - Matthew - 3/6

Rusty & Anthony Puglisi - son - Michael Puglisi- 3/5

Susan Reynolds - son - Craig Ander- son - 3/24

Lisa and John Russo - son - Casey - 3/17

Susan & John Rutland - son - Justin Rutland - 3/28

Sandy Salveter - son - Greg - 3/20

BIRTHDAYS CONTINUATION

Carol Sannella - son - David Sannella - 3/18

Arthur & Nancy Singer - son - Jeffrey Vincent Singer - 3/9

Jeffrey Smith - son - Jacob Smith - 3/2

Mary Ellen Swider - daughter - Kelly Swider - 3/25

Allan Thomas - son - Vernon Odins - 3/5

Joy Tower - son - Ken - 3/28

Peggy Tweed - son - Matthew Boc k- 3/18

Peggy West - daughter - Kelly Ann West - 3/8

Susan Yarnall - son - Jesse - 3/2

Carolyn & Tom Yuhas - son - Eric Whitelock - 3/4

Judi Zollers - son - Sam - 3/6

TO SCOTT

Although year by year time slips by ...

I still close my eyes dawn or very late

And there you are in my heart ...

I know now, this was your fate ...

I remember you especially on your birthdate

Scott Vincent Chamness February 15, 1962

Joan Chamness

They say there is a reason, they say that time will heal.

But neither time nor reason, will change the way we feel.

For no one knows the heartache that lies behind our smile.

No one knows how many times we have broken down and cried.

We want to tell you something, so there won't be any doubt.

You're so wonderful to think of but so hard to be without.

In memory of Peter Duffy 1976 - 2001

THOUGHTS FROM A PARENT WHO LOST AN OLDER CHILD

Perhaps, I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long.
Perhaps, there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me even if your memories are memories of only one or two days.

Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine.

In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the 'acceptable' diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are place in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with help of four treatment centers the recovery was not to be. One day at a time my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years has gone to a place where it can be tolerated. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same! My child has gone to a place where I cannot go and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one day at a time enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin, TCF - Orange Park - Jacksonville Chapter

RISKS

To laugh...is to risk appearing the fool

To weep...is to risk appearing sentimental

To reach out for another...is to risk involvement

To expose feelings...is to risk exposing your true self

To place ideas, your dreams before a crowd...is to risk their loss

To love...is to risk not being loved in return

To live...is to risk despair

To try...is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing

The person, who risks nothing, does nothing...has nothing...and is nothing.

They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn...feel...change...grow...love...live

Chained by their certitude's, they are a slave, they have forfeited their freedoms

Only a person who risks is free.

Author Unknow

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, Cincinnati, OH

MY SWING

Out in the backyard
 Was the most wonderful thing,
 From a huge maple tree
 There hung my swing.
 When I had a problem
 A bad day at school,
 Straight to my swing
 That's what I'd do!
 I'd swing away worries
 Swing high in the air,
 When I was there swinging
 I hadn't a care.

Now I am much older
 The pains run so deep,
 I have much depression
 And I cannot sleep.
 Now I am childless
 I don't have my boy,
 My reason for living
 The source of my joy.
 My life is so different
 Not a minute goes by,
 When I can become tearful
 I just start to cry.

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

My husband's so patient
 With me all these years,
 He never stops trying
 To stop all my tears.
 He gave me a gift
 Only a true friend can bring,
 He gave me back comfort
 He gave me my swing!

Diane Hornis

Alive Alone Newsletter

OUR LOGO: ITS MYSTERY AND ITS HISTORY



Are the hands reaching out or letting go? Are they the hands of one person or two? These are questions often heard from new members,...so we asked the people who know.

Much of the beauty of our logo lies in the fact that there are no definitive answers to its symbolism. At first glance its meaning seems obvious; yet as you look more closely, these questions may arise.

The hands represent different things to us at different periods in our grief journeys. To the newly bereaved, the hands reach out toward him or her, offering comfort and support. Later in our grief journeys, they may symbolize the process of letting go, of coming to terms with the child's death, or acknowledgment that the child is no longer a part of our earthly existence.

Still later in our grief journeys, we begin to reinvesting life and reach out toward others. Then, our hands become the hands which are extended to the newly bereaved. The circle is complete: a circle of love and understanding, with the child at the center.

Joe Lawley, Founder-Chairman of the Society of the Compassionate Friends (Coventry, England, 1969) supplied the details on how the logo came about. Help came from John Fisher Design, Marketing, LTD, Maggie and John Fisher (Coventry) – whose 8 ½ year old daughter, Clare, was killed on November 17, 1974 –wrote: "We are mobile, immediately available, and ready, both physically and spiritually, to begin work for the Friends. Please use us". The logo first appeared on the June 1975 newsletter.

Originally, the logo was a bright emerald green; subsequently, in 1977, the general universal color of royal blue with white was used and continues to this day.

Joyce Andrews

From "Friends Caring & Sharing"



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.

We need not walk alone, we are the Compassionate Friends.



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Forge PA Chapter
Frank & Rhonda Gomez
Chapter Leaders
12 Brook Circle

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

