



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



DECEMBER

December 2014

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Volume 28, Issue 12

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TCF Online Support

www.compassionatefriends.org
click on "Online Support" under

Who We Are

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national nonprofit self-help organization that offers friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings.

About Our Meetings...

Meetings are held 2nd Monday each month from 7 to 9 pm at Sacred Heart Hospital (2nd Flr. Conference Center), 4th & Chew Sts, Allentown. Free parking deck passes are available at the meeting.

Meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Younger siblings may benefit from one of the children's bereavement groups listed below. Meetings vary, from sharing, to guest speakers, to special presentations. Separate sharing sessions are offered to new members. Participation in group sharing is confidential and voluntary. Our hope is that being among other bereaved parents you may feel free to talk, cry and share, but it is okay to just come and listen too.

Meeting and Events Calendar

December 8 Joint Chapter Candle Light Remembrance Program

December 14 TCF World Wide Candle Lighting

January 12 Monthly Support Group Meeting

Meeting Cancellations

All cancellations will be posted on our [facebook page - facebook.com/TCFLehighValley](https://www.facebook.com/TCFLehighValley), on our [website homepage & calendar - www.lehighvalleytcf.org](http://www.lehighvalleytcf.org) and on [voicemail 484-891-0823](mailto:484-891-0823). Please refer to these sources for updates on the meetings

Other Local TCF Chapters Meetings

Carbon County

1st Wednesday 7:00 - 8:30 pm
Palmerton Community Ambulance Assn.
501 Delaware Ave. Palmerton
610-826-2938
Email: pannbiss@aol.com

Easton

2nd Thursday 7 - 9 pm
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,
2115 Washington Blvd., Easton
610-866-5468
Email: szabojanos1@verizon.net

Quakertown

2nd Tuesday 7:30 - 9 pm
St. Lukes Quakertown Hospital
1021 Park Ave, Quakertown
215-536-0173
Email: tcfquakertownchapter@verizon.net

Local Children's Support Groups

Ryan's Tree for Grieving Children (ages 5-18) - www.slnh.org/ryanstree

Sessions are offered at various times throughout the year. Call Krista Malone @ 610-997-7120 for information or register

Children's General Bereavement Group (ages 5 - 13)

Jeanette Laube, MA facilitates a children's bereavement group on a as needed basis. Preregistration required. Meeting day, time & place coincide with TCF, LV meetings. Call 610-762-5783 to register or for more information

TCF Telephone Friends

For those times that you need to connect with someone between meetings, the following bereaved parents are available to listen and share

Infant Loss	Kim Szep.....	610-730-3111	Suicide.....	John & Maria Szabo.....	610 866-5468
Infant Loss	Cathy McDonald...	732-732-3246	Addiction.....	Nancy Howe.....	484-863-4324
Multiple Children/ General Loss.....	Betty Thompson...	610 868-0303	Homicide.....	Ginger Renner.....	610-967-5113
Only Child.....	Shelly Garst.....	484 241-5396			

News, Events & Announcements

TCF Joint Chapter Candle Light Remembrance Service

December 8, 2014 6:45 - 9pm Sacred Heart Hospital Auditorium

We invite all TCF members as well as anyone who has experienced the loss of a child to join us as we celebrate the lives of our children, grandchildren and siblings in this very special service of remembrance. The program includes remembrance music, poetry, a slideshow of our children, a sibling candle wreath lighting, memorial scroll and more. The program starts promptly at 7 p.m., so please try to arrive 15-20 minutes prior.

The Memorial Scroll, inscribed with the names of our children and siblings who have died, will be on display. If your child's or sibling's name has yet to be inscribed, you will have an opportunity to add it. A memory table will be set up to display your photos. Following the program a reception will be held in the meeting room across the hall from the Auditorium. Please bring a favorite treat or finger food to share

Note: Volunteers are needed to help with the service and sibling volunteers for the sibling wreath lighting and readings. To

Hand Painted Personalized Ornaments & "Forever In My Heart" Wristbands available for purchase at Remembrance Service



The above items will be available for purchase after the service in the reception room. Dawn Delong's Angel Ornaments are available as a boy or girl, as shown above, and can be personalized with your child's name at the time of purchase. John Szabo will also be on hand selling TCF "Forever In My Heart" Wristbands

All proceeds benefit the chapter and the TCF Children's Memorial Garden

The 18th Annual TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting

December 14, 2014



The Worldwide Candle Lighting is a very special and moving event, when bereaved families join together from around the world in memory of all children gone too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 18th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the U.S. in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

In Our Area:

Lehigh Valley members, Tom & Eva Siebert are hosting their annual Holiday Candle Lighting Social at their home on Dec 14th at 5:30. Everyone welcome! Covered dishes welcome but not necessary, candles provided.

For Directions & to RSVP call Tom and Eva at 610 967-5886

Carbon County Chapter is hosting a candle lighting 6:30 at The Zion UCC Church, 2nd & Iron Sts, Lehighton. The program includes readings, music & candle lighting, followed by refreshments and fellowship. For information: davelora@ptd.net or 610-826-2938

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To Our New Members

Making the decision to come to your first meeting can be difficult. It can also be difficult to return for a second or third meeting, but we ask that you attend three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will work for you. We cannot walk your grief journey for you, but we can take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our members circumstances may be different, we have all "been there"...we are all grieving the loss of a child and therefore we can truly say we understand. You are not alone.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your first meeting, You were hurt, confused and felt alone in your grief. Remember the comfort you felt when you found you weren't alone and that others that had been where you were and survived. Remember the love and support you felt as fellow members offered on your grief journey. Now you are stronger and may not feel the need to attend meetings for aid and comfort. We need you though. New members need you. They need your encouragement, support and wisdom. If you haven't attended a meeting in awhile please consider coming back to offer hope to those who now feel lost and see no hope.

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely help another without helping himself"

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

The following ceremony is used every month to open TCF, Lehigh Valley's support group meetings and we also use a sibling variation during our Candle Light Remembrance Service. Many of our members have incorporated it into their own holiday celebrations as a way to honor and include their lost loved ones.

For this ceremony, place five candles around a simple wreath, which you may wish to place on a table or fireplace mantel.

As we light these five candles in honor of you, we light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories, one for our love, and one for our hope.

I light this first candle in for _____ it represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

I light this second candle for _____ it represents our courage - to confront our sorrow, to comfort each other, and to change our lives.

I light this third candle for _____ it is in your memory - the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the silly things you did, and the caring and joy you gave us.

I light this fourth candle for _____ it is the light of love. As we enter this holiday season, day by day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us.

I light fifth candle for _____ it is the light of hope. It reminds us of love and memories of you that are ours forever. May the glow of the flame be our source of hopefulness now and forever. We love you.

Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

Birthday and Anniversary dates can be especially difficult. Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and heart this month

Please Note: Due to privacy concerns Birthday and Anniversary listings are only published with permission for Parents/Guardians, Siblings and Grandparents. If your child, grandchild or sibling's name does not appear or a correction is needed please complete and sign the Update Form on page 11 and mail to the address indicated.

December Birthdays

Ryan Balliet	Son of Bruce and Pat Balliet	Dec 22
Robert Beidleman	Son of David and Margie Beidleman; Brother of Jill Metzger and David J. Beidleman	Dec 6
Sergei Beloglazova	Son of Natasha Beloglazova; Brother of Ulia Doschiavo	Dec 31
Hunter Bremmer	Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmar; Grandson of John Bremmar, Jr	Dec 12
Ryan Cole	Son of Terry and Michele Cole	Dec 4
Christine Conner	Daughter of Elaine Conner; Sister of Stephen Conner	Dec 15
Nathaniel Davis	Son of Ronald and Elizabeth Davis	Dec 9
Kelly Gallagher	Daughter of Marigrace Gallagher	Dec 31
Kevin Garrison	Son of Kathleen Garrison; Brother of Anthony Garrison	Dec 2
Brett Harris	Son of Chester and Carol Kinsey, Jr.; Brother of Terry & Lisa	Dec 10
Justin Hilbert	Son of Robert and Joan Hilbert; Brother of Ashley & Kyle Hilbert	Dec 22
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh	Son of Wayne and Linda Hollabaugh	Dec 20
Brian Lentz	Son of Gary and Judy Lentz	Dec 9
Doreen Meyers Ortiz	Daughter of Terry and Angeline Meyers; Sister of Dwayne T. Meyers	Dec 18
Jason Miller	Son of Phil and Pam Miller	Dec 10
Lisa Munjone	Daughter of Lorraine Parkhurst	Dec 5
Cody Myers	Son of David and Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12
Gianna Natale	Daughter of Daniel and Jaclyn Natale; Sister of Jaden Weller	Dec 26
Amanda Rehrig	Daughter of Gary and Roseanne Rehrig; Sister of Ernie Rehrig	Dec 7
Matthew Snyder	Son of Robert and Elizabeth Snyder; Brother of Megan and Jesse Snyder	Dec 22
Travis "Bo" Tkach	Son of Jim and Sandi Tkach; Brother of Tristin & Tyler Tkach	Dec 25

December Anniversaries

Patricia Alliston	Daughter of Glen & Peggy Wessner	Dec 3
Salvatore Bartolotta	Son of Salvatore & Mary Bartolotta	Dec 27
Robert Beidleman	Son of David & Margie Beidleman; Brother of Jill Metzger & David J. Beidleman	Dec 26
Jacquelyn Birk	Daughter of Heather McIntosh; Sister of Antoinette, Carolyn, Rebecca, Sarah, Michael & Izzabella McIntosh	Dec 4
Joshua Booth	Son of Les & Bonnie Booth	Dec 27
Justin Bramich	Son of Nancy Quinton; Brother of Ryan & Ian Bramich	Dec 31
Daniel Catino	Brother of Hunter, Tanner & Joshua Catino	Dec 5
Christine Conner	Daughter of Elaine Conner; Sister of Stephen Conner	Dec 30
David DeLong	Son of Gene & Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong; Grandson of David Kaufman	Dec 7
Wayne Ernst	Son of Julius & Doris Ernst; Brother of David Ernst	Dec 24
Rocky Fraccica	Son of Rocky & Sadie Fraccica	Dec 9
Jason Frey	Son of Lee Frey & Susan Center; Brother of Jared & Janel Frey	Dec 26
Kimberly Kissel	Daughter of Michael & Gloria Kissel, Jr.; Sister of Colleen & Micheal Kissel & Lisa Zelko	Dec 22

December Anniversaries

Randy Krieg	Grandson of Gloria Perlis	Dec 1
Todd Kuhns	Son of Leonard Kuhns & Shannon Kuhns; Brother of Leonard & Londa Kuhns	Dec 15
Trever Landis	Son of Robin Landis; Brother of Marlea, Dana & Kelsey Landis	Dec 9
Michael McLaughlin	Son of James & Julia McLaughlin; Brother of Matthew & Patrick McLaughlin	Dec 24
Cathy Mertz	Daughter of Franklin & Lucille Reinhard; Sister of Cheryl Ann McCue	Dec 17
Gianna Natale	Daughter of Daniel & Jaclyn Natale; Sister of Jaden Weller	Dec 26
Susette Olewine	Daughter of Louis & Joyce Szoke	Dec 2
Bradley Peters	Son of Robert & Anne Peters, Jr.; Brother of Jessica Mohn & Morgan Peters	Dec 11
Lauren Schneck	Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck	Dec 2
Steven Seibert	Son of Thomas & Eva Seibert; Brother of Nick & Krista Seibert; Grandson of Eva Juhasz	Dec 22
Jennifer Strohl	Daughter of Thomas & Christine Strohl	Dec 12
Travis Szerencits	Son of Craig & Cookie Harron	Dec 1
Chad Wagner	Son of Carl & Pamela Fehnel; Brother of Cori	Dec 23
Gregory Weiland, Jr	Son of Robin Weiland; Brother of Rozalyn Weiland	Dec 12
Michael Zalewski	Son of Krzysztof & Jolanta Zalewska; Brother of Monika Baraket	Dec 6



People Are Like Snowflakes

Have you ever stood outside, with your head tilted back and your mouth open wide, trying to catch a snowflake? Snowflakes fall everywhere, on your hair, your eyelashes, even your nose, and some manage to land on the very tip of your tongue, only to vanish before you can really get a taste.

Each snowflake is a completely different design and pattern. No two are ever created exactly the same. It is a mystery that continues to delight "snow catchers" everywhere. There are very few things that can be so lovely, so delicate, so perfect, so different and yet disappear so quickly, never to be reproduced in exactly the same pattern again.

Sometimes it seems as though people are like that too. Those we love are so wonderful, so perfect, so different — and they disappeared too quickly too. Each of us is as unique as a snowflake. We each have a unique look, sound, smell, and touch. There are no identical matches, just as there are no identical snowflakes.

We know this, but when it comes to grieving, we demand that everyone grieve the same way. Some of us will talk our way through the iciness of our grief while others prefer more solitude. Some want to read everything they can about grief while others wish to submerge themselves in work. Some need to "work off" their grief while others find it difficult to get out of bed. Some cry endlessly while others never shed tears. We are as unique as snowflakes drifting from the sky.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Just as the snowflakes find their way to their destination, so too, will each of us find our own way through grief. Frozen hearts and numb minds do eventually thaw. Icy memories that chill to the bone can grow warmer as we begin to move through our grief.

Whatever hurt we are carrying begins to weave itself into our very beings and eventually it becomes a part of our history. We begin to become the sum total of all of our experiences. Our unique patterns begin to reflect our unique journeys.

Darcie D. Sims Ph. D, CGC, CHT Originally printed in Bereavement Magazine.

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Our largest monthly expense is the printing and mailing of newsletters to our 400 readers. Your tax deductible Love Gift donations enables the chapter to continue our mission of reaching out to the newly bereaved and providing ongoing support to all our members. Love Gifts are most often given in memory of a child who has died. They may also be given in memory of or in honor of a friend, relative or special person.

To make a love gift donation please use form on page 11

Contributor	In Memory of
♥ Stephen & Jeannette Viglione	Jeanne C. Hurley <i>We love and miss you. Mom, Stephen, Cole & Family</i>
♥ James & Julia McLaughlin	Michael McLaughlin <i>Son of James & Julia Brother of Matthew & Patrick</i>
♥ Nancy Kornafel	Molly Hude <i>Missing you at Christmas. Grammy Nancy, Mom & Dad</i>
♥ Fern Gerth	Loren Holl <i>In loving memory of my son</i>
♥ Susan Uecker-Bittner	David Uecker <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ David Bremmer	Hunter Bremmer <i>Happy Birthday! Love Dad</i>
♥ Mickey & Dawn Berrigan	John Berrigan <i>In Loving Memory</i>

Donations and Contributions

TCF Lehigh Valley Contributors

- ★ *Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown for meeting room and drinks*
- ★ *Mary Ann Donuts, Allentown for meeting snacks*
- ★ *Giant Food Store Employees, Village West, Allentown for United Way contributions in memory of David Todd Smith*
- ★ *The Shafer Family Charitable Trust Foundation*

- ★ *United Way Payroll Contributors*
- ★ *Aetna Payroll Contributors*

TCF Carbon County Contributors

- ★ *Palmerton Community Ambulance Assn. for meeting room*
- ★ *The Country Harvest, Palmerton for meeting snacks*

To contribute through the United Way to The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley, ask your employer for the appropriate form and use the number **12116** in the write-in area.

To ourselves we can grant the gift of acceptance by realizing that our grief is a necessary healing process. To our families we can grant the gift of empathy by remembering that they hurt too. To our missing children we can bestow the gift of homage by determining to work through grief so that we can live life to the fullest.

~Candy McLaughlin, TCF Minneapolis, MN

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

Know when your holidays are

- ◆Holidays are not just at Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas, or New Year's.
- ◆Holidays are those times when family and friends get together for fun. It may or may not be associated with one of the traditional days of celebration.
- ◆Mark on your calendar the months during which your family's holidays occur.
- ◆Begin early to plan your coping strategies.

Be intentional about how you plan your holiday. Together, as a family, examine the events and tasks of the celebration and ask the following questions:

- ◆Do we really enjoy doing this? Is it done out of habit, free choice, or obligation? • Is this a task that can be shared?
- ◆WOULD THE HOLIDAY BE THE SAME WITHOUT IT?

Decide what you can handle comfortably.

- ◆Whether we are open to talk. about our child.
- ◆Whether we feel able to send holiday cards this year.
- ◆Whether we can handle the responsibility of the family dinner, holiday parties, etc. or if we wish someone else to take over some of these traditions this year.
- ◆Whether we will stay at home for the holidays or choose a different environment.
- ◆Shopping is definitely easier if you make the entire list ahead of time. Then when one of the "good days" comes along, you can get your shopping done quickly and with less confusion. Shopping by phone or from catalogs can also help.

Don't be afraid to make changes. It can really make things less painful.

- ◆Let the children take over decorating the tree or invite friends in to help. • Open presents the night before the holiday instead of in the morning.
- ◆Have dinner at a different time. Change the seating arrangement. • Burn a special candle to quietly include your absent son or daughter.

Our greatest comfort may come in doing something for others.

- ◆Giving a gift in memory of our child to a meaningful charity.
- ◆Adopting a needy family for the holidays.
- ◆Inviting a guest (foreign student, senior citizen, someone who would otherwise be alone) to share the festivities.

Evaluate your coping plans.

- ◆Do your plans isolate you from those who love and support you best?
- ◆Do your plans allow for meaningful expression and celebration of what the particular holiday means for you?

Let your plans and limits be known.

- ◆Write or phone family and friends to let them know of any intended changes.
- ◆Share with friends and family how you plan to approach the holiday and how they can best help you.

Don't be afraid to have fun.

- ◆Enjoyment, laughter, and pleasure are not experiences in which you abandon your child. You have not forgotten him/her. Your child would not want you to be forever sad; you need not feel guilty over any enjoyment you may experience.
- ◆Give yourself and members of your family permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holiday.

Finally, as you seek to make sensible plans, remember to make them firm enough to support you, but flexible enough to leave you some freedom. Most important, take time in your plans for three things:

- ◆Take time to pray - it is the key to the greatest power on earth.
- ◆Take time to worship - it is the road to reverence and washes the dust of earth from our eyes.
- ◆Take time to love and let yourself be loved - for this is the real gift of the holiday season.

We Can Make It

By Bettye & Sam Rosenberg, Louisville, KY

During the holiday season, both Christians and Jews light candles in celebration of their respective faiths. As they do so, even the darkest rooms become warm and bright from the glow of a candle. Then we can ask ourselves, how powerful or sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle?

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of a winter night --we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and darker during these winter months, we as bereaved parents must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but oh we need that little bit so badly.



Chanukah

By Ginette Kravet
TCF Central Jersey

Chanukah is here.
I see the candles glow,
red, pink and blue.
But you're not here to
see their pretty shadows.
I shop for gifts.
And this year, again, once more,
I won't be in a quandary
of what to buy.

I give you my love,
My precious son,
for that is eternal.
And once again
it will have to do.



The Angel Tree

By Lori & Mike Devanney
TCF, East Haddam, CT

Last December I went into a store and saw beautiful china angels to be placed on Christmas trees. I thought for a minute whether I should buy a few and put them on Michael's tree at the cemetery. Michael was five when he died from complications associated with open-heart surgery in 1993. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that they would probably be stolen and decided against buying them. Later the same afternoon and while at my office, I looked out the window through the winter air and thought silently of our precious little boy and those china angels. I then began to write:

As Christmas approaches, many of us forget that the true meaning of this holiday is to give. We knew that Michael would have given his last toy to a child without one. In remembrance of our child, those of you who come to visit Michael may take an angel from his tree and hang it in your home to help keep Michael's spirit alive."

I left my office that evening and went immediately back to the store and bought every single china angel they had. Last year, we went through 200 angels. We could not keep them on the tree long enough. We received notes and gifts at the cemetery from strangers who said they could not take something without leaving something in return. And how special our child must have been. Even six months later a stranger approached me at the cemetery and asked if I would be putting the angels up again this year because every time she got to the tree they were gone.

The joy we received in giving the angels was insurmountable. We know that there is a part of our son in so many homes and every time those people look at their angels, they will think of Michael.



Draw strength from traditions of your past; Hope from the changes you make for the present; and from them both, Faith in your ability to handle the future.

Bruce Conley - Handling the Holidays



The days are getting colder,
and the first snow's not too far off
It used to be so pretty,
gently falling from aloft.

But the snow won't be as pretty,
as it gathers on the ground,
Cause there'll be a snowman missing.
My son is not around.

The playing children's laughter
used to be a special song,
But this year will be different,
without my son along.

The song has lost its music,
and it'll be just another day,
As I gaze down from my window,
and watch the children play.

But the snow will again be pretty,
In a far off distant time,
And we'll build snowmen together
and we'll never look behind.

For now I'll remain with memories,
but the melting snow will fade,
And he builds snowmen to his heart's content,
'cause he lives where the snow is made.

Golden Train

I rested awhile in a dream
Where you were home again.
Trains chugged around a Christmas tree
On track that had no end.

Children watched in moonlight glow
As you laughed and spun a yarn
About a magical place so far away
Where children are free from harm.

You said, "Fancy trains go to and fro
And circle back again.
The rails are golden like woven thread
Laid out upon the sand.

Time stands still, there is no pain
And hearts are free as birds
All children walk and run and play"
You laughed as you spoke these words.

Checking a watch like grandpa wore
You said, "I have to go real soon
But I'll be back next Christmas Day
In the night but the full of the moon"

An hour more the children played
Round the Christmas tree that night
When I awoke from the lovely dream
Snow sparkled like gold in the light.

Oh, my son, could that be true
Were you really home last night?
Did you stop and rest awhile with me
On a golden train that has no end?

From a dream, Christmas Eve, 2005
Katy Womack, TCF Arlington, VA



We are on the Web



Visit our **web page** at www.lehighvalleytcf.org for group information, meetings schedule, upcoming events and helpful links.

Like our facebook page: www.facebook.com/TCFLehighValley for quotes, meeting & event reminders, and member forum.

Find us on **Pinterest** under the keyword **The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter**

Sibling Page

For Siblings During the Holiday Season

By Jennifer Lewandowski, TCF Portland, OR

It's hard being the survivor of a brother or a sister who has died. We often forget to validate our own grief, as we struggle to comfort those around us. Sometimes we set aside our own grief so that we may help those around us - searching, perhaps, for some semblance of normalcy in a situation that is anything but normal.

The guilt of all that we experience as grieving siblings can be overwhelming: guilt for being a survivor, for crying, for not crying, for being angry at ourselves, at our parents, at our deceased sibling for leaving us so soon.

22 years after my brother's death, I still get mired in guilt, particularly at the holidays (this year in particular, because it is my first away from my parents). I have walked away from my role in the support system. Twenty-two years later I still come down hard on myself for not being there for them. I forget to be there for myself.

I never shared with my parents, or anyone, that I was fiercely upset because our holidays were tense and seemingly full of hopelessness. I never told my mother, a decade into her grief, that her crying every Christmas made me feel as if I had never quite caught up to her grief.

When I was in profound moments of loneliness and grief with that stinging feeling, that I wanted to die too, I never told anyone. I felt I wasn't doing a good enough job of being a daughter, a sister, of grieving and living.

And while keeping so much bottled up may seem the appropriate way to handle your own grief, I found there was no freedom in withholding. Holidays are tricky, trying and tragic times for all of us. They remind us of a brighter past, and a future without a loved one.

Guilt seems to attach to every imaginable emotion. Why can't we be happier? Why aren't we grateful for what we have? Why are we so angry? Why can't we get out of bed in the morning? Why does life seem so hard to tackle, let alone the holidays? When I let go of guilt, I allow myself the chance to feel the emotion. Scary though that it is, I allow myself to get out from under the terrible pressure [that says I must] say the right thing, or meet someone else's expectations of how I should be acting and reacting to tough times. In short, I stop beating myself up.

Parents and children, without question, grieve differently. Just as we differ on what amount of sweets we think we

should be able to consume, the clothes we wear, the careers we choose, the way we drive, it is natural to grieve differently. It's nothing we should (though often we do) feel guilty about. Be good to, rather than hard on, yourselves this holiday season.

All I Want for Christmas

By Treena Mohrbutter, Evestevan, SK

What?

You ask me what I want for Christmas?

I want this constant pain and hurting
to go away.

I want this anger - locked up inside
to go away.

I want the pain and suffering
I see my family go through every day
to go away.

I want this hole in my stomach
And this hole where my whole heart once was
to be filled

I want the happiness and joy I once had
to come back

I want the last three months to do over.
I want my brother back,

Note: Sibling volunteers are needed to light the sibling wreath and as readers for the Candle Light Remembrance Service.

To Volunteer contact

Kathy Collins @

484-891-0823 or

TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

Love Gift Form

Please consider making a Love Gift to support the Compassionate Friends today.
 Your gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings, meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved.
 The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.

MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE 1ST OF THE MONTH PRIOR TO THE MONTH YOU WISH YOUR GIFT PUBLISHED

Contributor Name _____

Mail to:

Address _____

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
 LEHIGH VALLEY CHAPTER
 P.O. BOX 149
 BATH, PA 18014**

Phone _____

Email Address _____

I would like to make a donation In Memory of In Honor of A Chapter Gift (without memorial or honorarium)

Name of person gift given for _____

Edition Month desired publication month . Deadline by the 1st of the prior month _____

Special Text - Brief Messages Please. Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____ Lehigh Valley Carbon County Easton

Note: Please mail Carbon County & Easton gifts to the addresses below

If your gift is for Lehigh Valley please designate which of the following your gift is for (you may circle more than one)

Newsletter Expenses Postage Office Expenses Outreach Program Special Events

Mailing Addresses for Carbon County and Easton Chapters

The Compassionate Friends, Carbon County
 C/O Patti Bissell
 365 Drift Rd
 Palmerton, Pa 18071

The Compassionate Friends, Easton
 C/O John Szabo
 1514 Sculac Dr
 Bethlehem, Pa 18020

Member Update Form

Please use this form to change or update information or permit publication of child's Birth and Anniversary dates in "Our Children Remembered" (OCR) section.

Mail this update form to: Kathleen Collins, 2971 Pheasant Dr., Northampton, PA 18067 **or email updates to:** TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

The following is Information change or update Address or Phone change Permission (check this box to grant OCR publication Newsletter/ Web permission)

Your Name _____

Signature (required) _____

Relationship to Child _____

Email Address _____

Mailing Address (where your newsletter is to be sent to) _____

Phone Number _____

Child's Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Date of Death _____

Parent / Guardian Names _____

Child's Sibling's & or Grandparents Names (We publish only Parents/Guardians, Grandparents and Sibling names)

If this is a information change ... please indicate what changes need to be made (i.e. name change, correction, sibling name addition etc...)

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 and 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 we feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source for strength;

while some of us are struggling to find answers.

Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in a 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 that 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 grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends

Siblings Walking Together

(Formerly the Sibling Credo)

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.

Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.

Sometimes we will need the support of our friends.

At other times we need our families to be there.

Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be.

We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us.

When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed.

We are living a life very different from what we envisioned,

and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak.

Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life.

Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows
as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.

About This Newsletter

This newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter with the hope that it will be a helpful resource for you on your grief journey.

If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter please contact the newsletter editor

by phone at 484-891-0823; by email: TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

or by mail sent to TCF Lehigh Valley, ATTN: Newsletter Editor, PO Box 149, Bath, PA 18014



Please Note: Our newsletters are mailed through Bulk Mail and the Post Office does not forward or hold bulk mail. It is returned to us at our expense.

If you are moving or having your mail held please remember to inform the Newsletter Editor (see information above). If your newsletter is returned to us and we are not notified your name will be removed from the mailing list.

Newsletter Submissions

Submit articles and poetry to the editor by the first of the proceeding month. Include the author's name & your contact information.

Mail to: TCF Lehigh Valley, ATTN: Newsletter Editor, PO Box 149, Bath, PA 18014 or email to: [email: TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com](mailto:TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com)