



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



July 2014

Copyright © 2014 The Compassionate Friends, Inc

Volume 28, Issue 7

Mailing Address:

PO Box 149
Bath, PA 18014

Phone:
484-597-0240

Email:
tcflehighvalley@gmail.com

Website
www.lehighvalleytcf.org

Facebook Page
facebook.com/TCFlehighvalley

Steering Committee

Brian & Kathleen Collins, Gene & Dawn DeLong, George Geiger, Brenda Solderitch, Sharon Yurick;

Newsletter Editor

Kathleen Collins
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com
484-891-0823

Treasurer / Newsletter Mailing Coordinator

Brenda Solderitch

Remembrance Secretary

BirthDay Cards
Maria Szabo

Acknowledgement Secretary

Sharon Yurick

Newly Bereaved Packet

George & Pat Geiger

Newly Bereaved Contact

Dawn DeLong
484-597-0240

TCF Regional Coordinators

Ann Walsh & Bobbi Milne

TCF National Headquarters

1(877) 969-0010 (toll-free)
www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF Online Support

www.compassionatefriends.org
click on "Online Support" under the "Find Support" tab

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

July 14 Monthly Meeting - General Sharing

August 11 Monthly Meeting - General Sharing

September 8 Monthly Meeting - General Sharing

Meeting Cancellations

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

Other Local TCF Chapters Meetings

Carbon County	Easton	Quakertown
1st Wednesday 6:30 - 8:30 pm Palmerton Community Ambulance Assn. 501 Delaware Ave. Palmerton 610-826-2938 Email: pannbiss@aol.com	2nd Thursday 7 - 9 pm Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2115 Washington Blvd., Easton 610-866-5468 Email: szabojanos1@verizon.net	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.slhn.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... 610 391-1474	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	

Inside this issue:

Chapter News	2
Article - Its okay to Grieve	3
Our Children Remembered Birthdays	4
Our Children Remembered Anniversaries	5
Love Gifts & Donations	6
Thoughts - Natures Images of a Son	7
Article - Summer Thoughts	7
Poem - The Fourth of July	8
Poem - Golden Scrapbook	8
Article - 4th of July	9
Article - Liberation	9
Sibling Page: - Article - First Step	10
Love Gift Donation Form	11
Credos	12

News, Events & Announcements

June Picnic

On June 14th, 44 TCF members, family and friends gathered to share good food and enjoy the fellowship at our annual memorial balloon release and picnic. We enjoyed a variety of delicious homemade food and desserts and no one went home hungry. After lunch everyone had a chance to write a personal note to their loved ones on their balloons, Mary Arndt read the poem "Balloons of Love" and we released our balloons in unison and watched as they floated up to heaven.

A special thank you to all that attended and to our volunteers Brian & Kathy Collins, George Geiger, Yvonne Hude, Mark Saginario, Brenda Solderitch, and Bob & Sharon Yurick,

New Local Bereavement Group

A new local chapter of GRASP (Grief Support After Substance Passing) has formed in the Lehigh Valley. Peer-led support group meetings are held on the third Monday each month, from 7-8:30 pm at the First Presbyterian Church, Cedar Crest & Tilghman Sts. Allentown. There is no fee to attend and all are welcome, but pre-registration is required.

To register or for more information, contact Nancy at 484-788-9440 or 484-863-4324 or by email: nancyhowe@ymail.com



We are on the Web



Visit our **web page** at www.lehighvalleytcf.org for support 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**

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)

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

New Members

We regret the cause that has brought you here. As fellow bereaved we offer care, compassion, comfort and a deep understanding of the pain you are experiencing.

Easton - Tammy Fagan & Mark Hansen - Son - Trevor DePugh

Easton - Al and Kim Kortze - Son - Joshua A. Kortze

Easton - Cathi Jesse - Son - Brandon Jesse

Easton - Heather McIntosh - Daughter - Jacquelyn Birk

Easton - John Patrick Illes - Son - Garrett Patrick Illes

Easton - Baily Benner - Son - Gabriel Benner

Easton - Mary Green - Daughter - Juliana Eberharter

Easton - William Fernandez - Daughter - Paige Fernandez

Easton - Judy Negrete - Daughter - Tanya Negrete

It's Okay to Grieve

Patricia Lufty Nevitt TCF, Austin TX

It's okay to Grieve

The death of a child is a reluctant and drastic amputation, without anesthesia. The pain cannot be described, and no scale can measure the loss. We despise the truth that the death cannot be reversed and, somehow, our dear one returned.

It's Okay to Cry.

Tears release the flood of sorrow, of missing and of love. Tears relieve the brute force of hurting, enabling us to level off and continue our cruise along the stream of life.

It's Okay to Heal.

We do not need to prove we love our child. As the months pass, we are slowly able to move around with less outward grieving each day. We need not feel guilty, for this is not an indication that we love less. It does mean that, although we don't like it, we are learning to accept death.

It's Okay to Laugh.

Laughter is not a sign of less grief. Laughter is not a sign of less love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh.

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 siblings 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. Thank You

July Birthdays

Megan Benninger	Granddaughter of Betty Thompson	Jul 21
Krystal Bourquin	Daughter of Shelly Bourquin – Brusko; Sister of Alexandria, Gabriel & Xavier	Jul 17
Joseph Chanitz	Son of John & Ruth Chanitz	Jul 16
Lorriane Corbo	Daughter of Debbie Goodman; Sister of Lisa Corbo	Jul 13
Sarah Davidson	Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Jul 10
Denise Deiter	Daughter of Franklin & Lucille Reinhard; Sister of Cheryl Ann McCue	Jul 3
Darlene Fitch	Sister of Diane Lehr & Gary Fitch	Jul 20
Robert Freudenberger	Son of Nola Freudenberger	Jul 17
Kelly Gallagher	Daughter of Tom & Sherry Gallagher;	Jul 14
Luke Hahn	Son of Dana Hahn	Jul 7
Dean Hess	Son of Dale & Joanne Hess; Brother of Lisa Hess	Jul 31
John Leonard, Jr	Son of John & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen	Jul 27
Mitchell "Mitch" Lloyd	Son of Sandra Lloyd; Brother of Douglas,Randy & Fran Lloyd	Jul 27
Michael Longyore	Son of Charlotte Longyore	Jul 6
Joseph McGouldrick	Son of Pat McGouldrick; Brother of Jennifer McGouldrick	Jul 24
Ed McNally	Son of Don & Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29
Buddy Pearson	Son of Bob & Shelly Garst	Jul 12
Bradley Peters	Son of Robert & Anne Peters, Jr.; Brother of Jessica Mohn & Morgan Peters	Jul 22
Michael Powers	Son of Richard & Margaret Powers; Brother of Billy, Richie, Tara & Ryan Powers	Jul 9
Cory Ross	Son of Kathy Ross; Brother of Michael Ross	Jul 24
Aaron Schaible	Son of Linda Stewart; Brother of Andy Schaible & the late Jennifer Schaible	Jul 30
Ronald "Ronnie" Sherbaum, Jr.	Son of Ronald & Donna Sherbaum, Sr.; Brother of Daniel & Joseph Sherbaum	Jul 17
Jeanmarie Siedlecki-Moyer	Daughter of Joe & Monica Siedlecki; Sister of MaryAnn & Michele Siedlecki & the late Joey Siedlecki	Jul 30
Christopher Stasurak	Son of Paul & Adriane Stasurak	Jul 10
Casey Stengel	Son of Casey & Jane Stengel; Brother of Chrissy,Sarah,Lisa & Mike Stengel	Jul 22
Kyle Strohl	Son of Ron & Gail Strohl; Brother of Jennifer Grimes	Jul 10
James "Jimmy" Thompson	Son of the late C. Douglas "Doug" Thompson	Jul 31
Hunter Wolfe	Son of Tony Wolfe & Kimberly B Sargent; Brother of Carter & Olivia Wolfe & Katarina Sargent	Jul 23

July Anniversaries

William Bender	Son of Dean and Sheri Tretter	Jul 8
Megan Benninger	Granddaughter of Betty Thompson	Jul 21
Timothy Bogart	Son of Nancy and Bill Bogart; Brother of Katelyn Bogart & Ryan Bogart	Jul 4
Hunter Bremmer	Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmar; Grandson of John Bremmar, Jr	Jul 12
Sarah Davidson	Daughter of Dean and Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Jul 10
Sheila DeBoer	Daughter of Barbara DeBoer & the late Henry DeBoer; Sister of Leslie and Cory DeBoer	Jul 27
Brian DeLong	Son of Lenny and Linda Fritzingler	Jul 4
Mark Dilts, Jr	Son of Mark and Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts	Jul 8
Alexandra Dixon	Daughter of Albert and Joan Dixon; Sister of Zack Dixon	Jul 31
Eric Fenstermacher	Son of Rick and Kathleen Fenstermacher; Brother of Heather Fenstermacher	Jul 31
Sgt. Christopher Geiger	Son of George and Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock; Michael, Terrance, David & Timothy Geiger	Jul 9
Eric Graver	Son of Mary L Graver	Jul 9
Luke Hahn	Son of Dana Hahn	Jul 5
Dean Hess	Son of Dale and Joanne Hess; Brother of Lisa Hess	Jul 22
James "Jimmy" Hotz	Son of James and Elizabeth Hotz	Jul 4
Molly Hude	Daughter of Rex and Yvonne Hude; Grand daughter of Nancy Kornafel	Jul 2
Allan Itterly	Son of Richard and Jeanette Itterly; Brother of Albert and James	Jul 8
Colleen Kilker	Daughter of Mark and Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget and Mark Kilker	Jul 23
Dylan Krum	Son of David & Lora Krum; Brother of the late Gavin Krum; Grandson of Nevin Krum; and Henry & Shirley Long	Jul 15
David Kunsman	Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	Jul 15
Kristin Kuser	Daughter of Tim and Elizabeth Kuser	Jul 31
Michael Longyore	Son of Charlotte Longyore	Jul 31
Doreen Meyers Ortiz	Daughter of Terry and Angeline Meyers; Sister of Dwayne T. Meyers	Jul 13
Amanda Mohr	Daughter of Beverly Mohr & Rodney Mohr	Jul 22
Valeri Powers	Sister of Stephen, Raymond & Gerald Taranto	Jul 31
Peter Radocha	Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Frank Radocha, Jr & Gina Sacco	Jul 1
Larry Shunk	Son of Betty Thompson	Jul 21
Joseph Siedlecki, Jr	Son of Joe and Monica Siedlecki; Brother of MaryAnn & Michele Siedlecki and the late Jeanmarie Siedlecki Moyer	Jul 9
Matthew Snyder	Son of Robert and Elizabeth Snyder; Brother of Megan and Jesse Snyder	Jul 10
Christopher Stasurak	Son of Paul and Adriane Stasurak	Jul 10
Keith Storat	Son of Richard and Susan Storat; Brother of Todd & Greg	Jul 22
Benjamin Thomas	Son of Kathy Thomas; Brother of James Thomas	Jul 13
Travis "Bo" Tkach	Son of Jim and Sandi Tkach; Brother of Tristin & Tyler Tkach	Jul 20
Steven Winkler	Son of Ellen Winkler; Brother of Jennifer; Grandson of Arnold Abramowitz	Jul 26
Hunter Wolfe	Son of Tony Wolfe & Kimberly B Sargent; Brother of Carter & Olivia Wolfe & Katarina Sargent	Jul 7

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 siblings name does not appear above or a correction is needed please complete and sign the Update Form on page 11 and mail to the address indicated.

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
♥ Richard and Susan Storat	Keith D. Storat <i>Miss You !! Mom, Dad, Todd and Greg</i>
♥ Elizabeth Hotz and Keith	Jimmy Hotz <i>You and Dad are together in Heaven. We miss you both</i>
♥ Joan Kunsman	Charles R. Kunsman, Jr, David Kunsman & Walter Alfonso <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Steven Ryan Winkler	Ellen Winkler & Jennifer Winkler <i>We miss you more every day & love you always</i>
♥ Yvonne Hude	Molly Hude <i>Will always miss you and your beautiful smile. Love, Mom, Dad & Grammy</i>
♥ David Bremmer	Hunter Bremmer <i>In Loving Memory. Love, Dad</i>
♥ Rella Daniels	Jonelle L. Sisonick <i>In memory of Jonelle Sisonick. Happy Birthday to my beloved daughter, Jonelle Luv, Mom</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*
- ★ *Josephine Leiby*

★ *Dennis & Lori Keller*

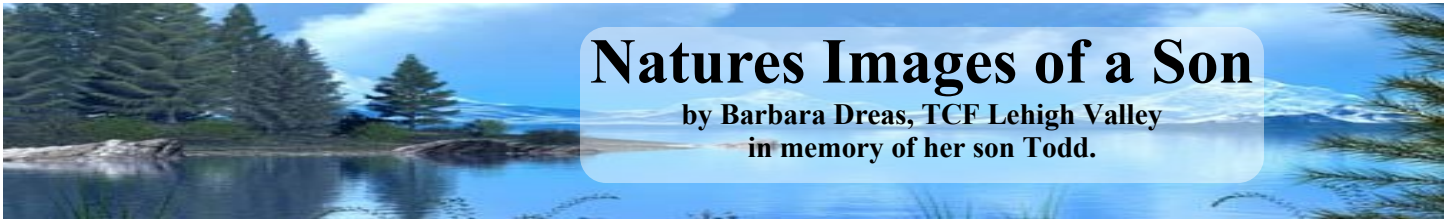
★ *Aetna Payroll Contributors*

★ *United Way 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.



Natures Images of a Son

by Barbara Dreas, TCF Lehigh Valley
in memory of her son Todd.

Good Morning my son!

As I sit here on the edge of this ever so quiet lake in these Endless Mountains, my thoughts turn to you...

I imagine the lake, so still and peaceful, must be like the peace you feel now, free from pain and the turmoil of the world.

I imagine the endless circles made by the fish on the water's surface much like the endless memories of you that will forever make us smile.

I imagine the breeze that softly surrounds me like your gentle caring nature that enveloped all who knew you.

I imagine the warm, bright sun as intense as the love you radiated.

As I sit here with my thoughts, the tears roll down my cheeks, my heart aching for you to be with me the way you used to be. But then I hear the musical sounds from the early morning birds, and....

I imagine it's you talking to me; "Good morning mom. Don't be sad, I'm ok. Where I am is as peaceful and warm and wonderful as where you are this morning in the Endless Mountains. Be happy for me.

And then....

I imagine you are safe and content and some day, we will be together again.

Summer Thoughts

By Libby Gonzalez, TCF - Huntsville. AL

Summer is a time when things naturally slow down, a time when many are waiting for the orderly routine of their lives to begin again. For those of us in grief whose lives are already in limbo, it can seem endless if we let it. Seeing children, babies, and teenagers is not easy for us, and we see them everywhere from shopping centers to beaches, everyone is out living, loving, enjoying carefree activities with their children, and we want to scream, "it's not fair!" I was sitting on my patio one evening at dusk recently listening to the shouts of children playing, and I was crying as I remembered the sounds that my child used to make. I became very depressed as I thought what a long summer this was going to be.

In my reverie, I was reminded of a recent comment that I had heard at a TCF meeting: "My child was such a loving, giving person. He would not want me to waste my life being bitter." I also remembered a good friend telling me to "count my blessings" and naming all the things I had to be grateful for. I was furious at the time. Nothing that I had to be grateful for could compensate for the fact that my child was dead.

Now, sitting in the twilight of this early summer evening, I began to see things differently. I was determined that this summer would not be an eternity; I would not let it be. I decided first of all to stay busy. I know I can find plenty to do if I only take the time to look. I am also going to try to enjoy the simple things that used to give me so much pleasure, like working in my garden, and flowers. I then decided to try to be truly grateful for the blessings that I have, like my husband, my surviving children, my job, friends, etc.

I has been almost five years for me, and I know that last year this would not have worked. Of course, I still have times of sadness. I know I always will, but I have decided that in the process of grieving, we close so many doors that the only way to recovery is to reopen them gradually at our own pace.

I know I will never be the same person I was before the death of my child but I hope eventually in some ways I will be a better person because suffering can be beneficial if we learn and grow through it. A year ago I didn't feel this way, and I know I still have a long way to go, but in the meantime, I know the greatest tribute to my child will be to enjoy this summer as he would have done.



The Fourth of July

© Karen Lynch, June 6, 1997

Dedicated to Tim Lynch,

The Fourth of July is now spent without you,
This favorite day is now only dark and blue.
The day with picnics has only clouds and rain
No sun will shine to ease this pain

The BBQ sits abandoned and cold
No longer used for your treats of old.
No swimming, no baseball, no games do we play
No ice cream or watermelon makes pain go away.

The fireworks display do not seem as bright
The colors are dull and give off no light.
This is the part of the day that you loved the most,
With star bursts and rockets that flew higher than the rest.

The Fourth of July, this party each year
Is now just a day, this has become so very clear.
It gives me no joy without you here.
Your holiday of choice -- we miss you my dear.

Golden Scrapbook

Lois Gardner,
TCF Grand Junction, CO

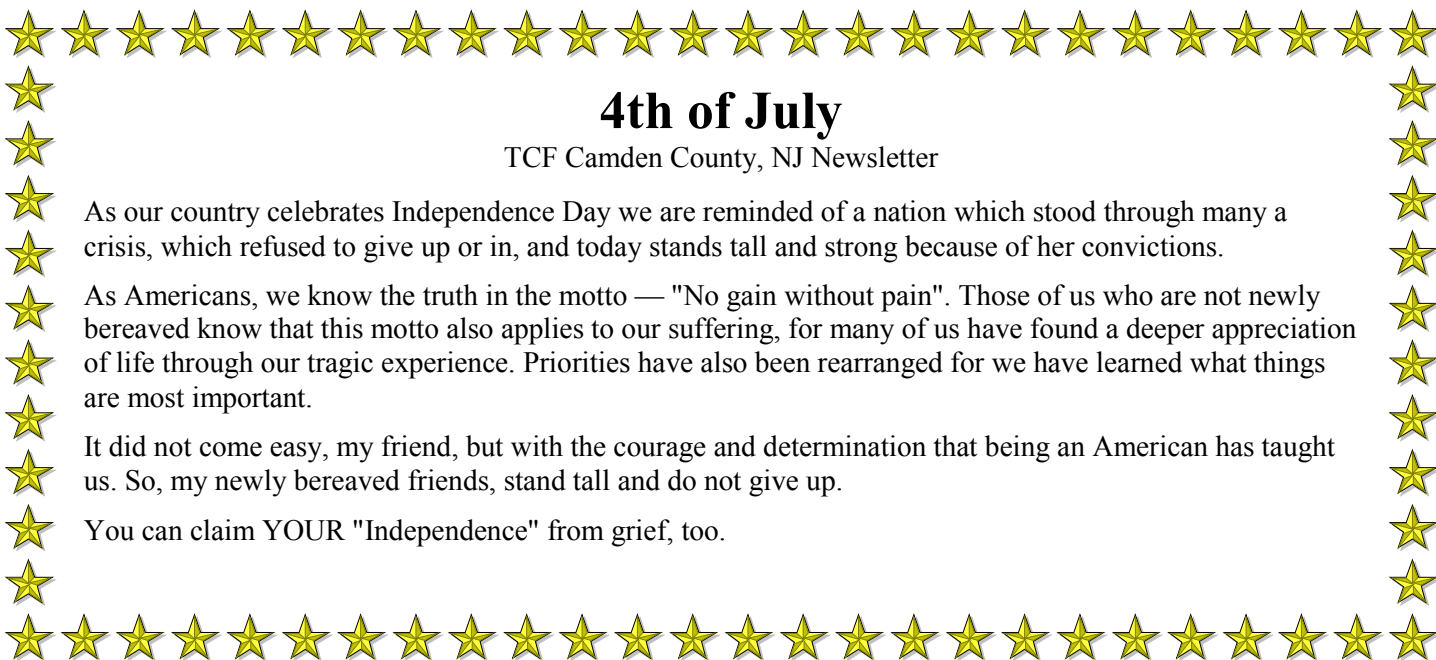


A treasure cache of memories,
A scrapbook in my mind
A baby boy with big blue eyes
And golden hair I find.

A toddler grabbing marshmallows
His little fist closed tight
A first grader with brand new books
Brave and proud and bright.

A picture here - a feeling there
I shuffle them together
And sort them over constantly
Although I know I'd rather

Not have to search for memories
But still I must - I find
Add page on page on page on page
To the golden scrapbook in my mind.



4th of July

TCF Camden County, NJ Newsletter

As our country celebrates Independence Day we are reminded of a nation which stood through many a crisis, which refused to give up or in, and today stands tall and strong because of her convictions.

As Americans, we know the truth in the motto — "No gain without pain". Those of us who are not newly bereaved know that this motto also applies to our suffering, for many of us have found a deeper appreciation of life through our tragic experience. Priorities have also been rearranged for we have learned what things are most important.

It did not come easy, my friend, but with the courage and determination that being an American has taught us. So, my newly bereaved friends, stand tall and do not give up.

You can claim YOUR "Independence" from grief, too.

Liberation

Andrea Gambill, Bereavement Magazine

It is one thing to be free; it is quite another to be liberated. Liberation implies that freedom was absent and there was bondage. Though it may not always seem obvious, grief has both the power to bind and the power to liberate from bondage.

Initially, when a person we love dies, it seems we are in the bondage of grief and will never recover. It feels as if we will never be the same again - and we are right, we never will be the same again. But maybe being the same again shouldn't be our goal. Confronted by death, we suddenly see LIFE in a totally different way than we ever considered it before. Gradually, we begin to realize HOW we are different, and it is in those differences that we can find liberation and new freedoms.

Many of the things we used to think were important are now irrelevant. Previous goals and opportunities are now limp, meaningless, empty and discarded. But as we lose interest in many of the things that formerly seemed so life-enhancing, we discover new values and priorities.

At last we are liberated from the bondage of competition. If we were formerly obsessed with the fastest, the most expensive, the biggest, the newest, the most beautiful, the most powerful, we now know how empty and futile those victories can be. In our "other lives", we believed we had to belong to the right organizations, attend the right schools, live in the right neighborhoods, work in the right jobs, wear the right clothes, have the right opinions. Now, some of the things that were "right" are wrong, and some just simply don't matter anymore. Our grief has liberated us from those masters.

We have a new freedom to challenge, to attempt new ventures, to confront old relationships, to develop and explore latent skills and talents. No longer are we burdened and shackled by "should" and "ought".

We have the freedom to be wrong. Though we are no longer "right" as often as we used to be, when we are right, we're more certain and less abusive about it.

We have been liberated from inhibition and self-consciousness. The strength born of our pain has given us the courage to speak out when before we might have been silent. We no longer fear the criticism and judgment of others. Who can hurt us now? We have experienced the worst and survived. Sorrow has stripped away those

fears. Now, we are more aware of the panorama of Life and less concerned with our own little piece of it.

We have discovered the freedom to express our affection for others freely, even lavishly. We are acutely aware that there may be no more chances to say "Goodbye," or, "I love you," one more time.

We are free to develop a new acquaintance with our inner selves. Often we have a keener awareness of the "still, small voice" within. We hear our directions with more sensitivity and trust. We are more aligned with our spiritual connections and perhaps less impressed with "religion." We have learned to appreciate wisdom above knowledge.

We have the freedom to appreciate time in a new value system. Our experience has taught us to view time with a new fragility, because we know how easily and quickly it can seem to end.

***Confronted by
death, we suddenly
see LIFE in a totally
different way than we ever
considered it before. Gradually,
we begin to realize HOW we
are different, and it is in
those differences that
we can find liberation
and new freedoms.***

We have the freedom to have an open mind. Previously, we may have made concrete and inviolate decisions about anything ranging from breakfast cereal to eternal destiny. Now, we are more cautious, ready to hear another point of view. - Whereas we used to have all the answers, now we just have all the questions.

Finally, we have achieved a freedom from the fear of death. We can now look Death squarely in the eye and know that there is no more intimidation. No longer are we afraid. Death had one trump card, and now that it's been played, we stand in the victor's circle.

With liberation, we are free to live and work and advocate in memory of our absent loved ones for whatever time we remain here on Earth. And when it's our turn to be called away, we will leave behind an ongoing legacy of freedom for those we love who yet remain.

Yes, in liberation, there is peace.

***Life can be the same after a trinket is lost,
But never after the loss of a treasure***

*Pat Irion,
TCF Savannah, GA*

Sibling Page

First Step

Scott Mastley - TCF, Atlanta GA

When my brother died in a car accident seven years ago, I was reminded of a 17 year-old boy I knew in high school who had lost his father suddenly. I hadn't known anyone who'd lost a parent before then, and I was curious about how he had acted at the funeral. It made quite an impression on me when I heard that he was calmly speaking with his friends and thanking them for their support. I told myself then, that if I were ever in that situation, I would also be strong.

As I stood in the kitchen seven years ago with *He didn't make it* echoing in my head, I remembered the boy whose father had died, I wanted to be brave like him, to be strong for those around me. I wanted to show everyone that I was resilient, and I wanted to deliver what everyone was telling me to deliver. All the calls and visits began or ended with someone saying, "Be strong for your parents. They need you to be strong for them now." There was also a popular song playing on every station with the lyrics "You got to be cool. You got to be calm. You got to stay together ... You got to be strong. You got to be wiser." I made it my mantra. I couldn't sleep, so I'd silently chant to myself, You've got to be strong. You've got to be strong.

At first my parents thanked me for showing strength. They were amazed that I was able to walk around and shake hands and thank people for coming to the wake. I tried to reassure everyone while my parents struggled to respond to the sympathy of friends and family members. They didn't feel capable of much conversation. I spoke at the funeral while they listened, teary-eyed, in the pew. I thought I was reaching deep, pulling out powers of resilience that had been dormant in me. I was proud of myself

for putting others at ease.

At the same time, there were questions slowly rising to the surface of my consciousness.

What about you, Scott? When do you take care of yourself? What do you need? I felt guilty worrying about myself when, according to everyone around me, my parents were depending on me. Not that I ever took the time to actually discuss it with them - I just assumed I was supposed to be the unbending oak. I cried every day, but I made sure I didn't cry in front of them. I left the room if I felt tears building. I tried to push the questions into a dark, distant corner of my mind. I'd answer the phone and hear, "It must be hard for them. Please tell your parents that our prayers are with them." When I hung up, I couldn't help wondering why the callers didn't say, "It must be hard on the three of you. Our prayers are with you."

Then my parents began expressing their concern for me. Sensing my isolation, they began to realize that my grief was being overlooked. They realized that they were getting all the support while I was being told to support them. They said they worried about me. They asked who was supporting me. Their empathy helped me accept and admit to my private concerns. I could only be strong for so long. I didn't want to be selfish, but I knew that my brother's death was an extraordinary circumstance. I missed him terribly, and each day I felt more exhausted. Nature was telling me something. I had to stop moving, stop reassuring, and stop acting for the sake of others. I had to admit that I didn't know how to handle grief. I had to stop being the steady, reassuring voice in our family and let the sadness come over me. I had to cry and find some time to be alone. I didn't have to learn to live with the full reality of my loss overnight, but I had to let the grief take me and begin to learn. That's when my journey, as a surviving sibling, began.

Siblings may be ambivalent about their relationships in life but in death the power of their bond strangles the surviving heart. Death reminds us that we are part of the same river, the same flow from the same source, rushing towards the same destiny. Were you close? Yes but we didn't know it then.

Barbara Ascher, Landscape without Gravity

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

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.