



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

December 2015

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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

- Dec 13 TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting - See page 2 for details
- Dec 14 Candlelight Remembrance Service - See page 2 for details
- Jan 11 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 Bereavement Groups & TCF Chapters

TCF Carbon County Chapter - 1st Wednesday 7:00 - 8:30 pm at Palmerton Community Ambulance Assn., 501 Delaware Ave. Palmerton
Chapter Leader - Patti Bissell, Contact Phone: 610-826-2938 Contact Email: pannbiss@aol.com

TCF Easton Chapter- 2nd Thursday 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2115 Washington Blvd., Easton
Chapter Leaders John & Maria Szabo, Contact Phone: 610-866-5468 Contact Email: szabojanos1@verizon.net

TCF Quakertown Chapter - 2nd Tuesday 7:30 - 9:00 pm at St. Lukes Quakertown Hospital; 1021 Park Ave, Quakertown
Contact Phone: 215-536-0173, Contact Email: tcfquakertownchapter@verizon.net

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing) 3rd Monday at The First Presbyterian Church, Cedar Crest & Tilghman Sts., Allentown
Preregistration required, Contact: Nancy Howe 484-863-4324; 484-788-9440; nancyhowe@ymail.com

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) Meeting day, time & place coincide with TCF, LV
Facilitated by Jeanette Laube, MA on a as needed basis. Preregistration required. Call 610-762-5783

TCF Telephone Friends

For those times you need to connect with someone between meetings, the following members 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 |
| Only Child..... | Shelly Garst..... | 484 241-5396 | Homicide..... | Ginger Renner..... | 610-967-5113 |

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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



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: TCF Lehigh Valley, ATTN: Newsletter Editor, PO Box 149, Bath, PA

If you are Moving or going on Vacation and having your mail held or forwarded Please inform the Newsletter Editor of your new address or of a hold or forward on you mail. The Post Office does not hold or forward the newsletter. They are returned at our expense and we in turn remove those

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, cancelations and member forum.

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

Newsletter Submissions

2016 Cutoff dates for publication of Love Gifts, articles and poetry

Issue	Cutoff Date
Winter (January, Febuary, March)	December 1 st
Spring (April, May, June)	March 1 st
Summer (July, August, September)	June 1 st
Fall (October, November, December)	Sept 1 st

Send Poems and Articles (with the author's name & your contact information) by mail to: TCF Lehigh Valley, ATTN: Newsletter Editor, PO Box 149, Bath, PA 18014 or email to: email: TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

We reserve the right to alter, modify or reject submissions not in keeping with our mission

News, Events & Announcements

Remembrance Weekend December 12-13, 2015

Zion UCC Church, 2nd & Iron Sts, Lehighton

Saturday events include a 5k or 1 mile run/walk (registration & fee required); various bereavement panel discussions/sharing sessions; Keynote speaker Sara Ruble and Trinity Praise Band concert (Free but registration required)

Sunday 6:30 pm - Worldwide Candle Lighting Service

For information & registration forms visit: www.Zionlehighton.org, or at www.facebook.com/dylanandgavinsrainbow. For more information Call: Ken at Zion UCC - 610-377-1191 or Email Dave & Lora at davelora@ptd.net.



The 19th Annual TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting December 13, 2015

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

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 19th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone

In the Lehigh Valley area Tom & Eva Siebert are hosting their annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Social at their home on Dec 13th at 5:30. Everyone welcome! Covered dishes welcome but not necessary, candles provided.

For information, directions & to RSVP call Tom and Eva at 610 967-5886



TCF Candle Light Remembrance Service December 14, 2015

Sacred Heart Hospital Auditorium 6:45 - 9pm



All TCF members as well as anyone who has experienced the loss of a child is invited 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 readings, a slideshow of our children, a sibling candle wreath lighting, memorial scroll and more. The program starts promptly at 7 p.m., so please 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 your child's a favorite treat or finger food to share

Hand Painted Personalized Ornaments

Dawn Delong's precious angel ornaments will be available for purchase after the remembrance service in the reception room. They are available as a boy or girl, and Dawn will personalize them with your child's name at the time of purchase.

Proceeds from the sale of the ornaments are donated to the chapter



Note: Volunteers are needed to help with the service and poetry readings. To volunteer please arrive by 6:00 pm and see Brenda in the regular meeting room across from the auditorium.

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

Note: Due to privacy concerns Birthday and Anniversary listings are only published with permission for Parents/Guardians, Siblings & Grandparents. For additions and corrections complete & sign the Update Form (pg 11) & mail to the address indicated.

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

Child	Parents and Guardians, Siblings & Grandparents	Birthday	Anniv.
Patricia Alliston	Daughter of Glen and Peggy Wessner	Jun 22	Dec 3
Salvatore Bartolotta	Son of Salvatore and Mary Bartolotta	Nov 26	Dec 27
Robert Beidleman	Son of David and Margie Beidleman; Brother of Jill Metzger and David J. Beidleman	Dec 6	Dec 26
Jacquelyn Birk	Sister of Antoinette, Carolyn, Rebecca, Sarah, Michael & Izzabella McIntosh	May 5	Dec 4
Joshua Booth	Son of Les and Bonnie Booth	Mar 12	Dec 27
Hunter Bremmar	Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmar; Grandson of John Bremmar, Jr	Dec 12	Jul 12
Nathaniel Davis	Son of Ronald and Elizabeth Davis	Dec 9	Aug 21
David DeLong	Son of Gene and Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong; Grandson of David Kaufman	Oct 23	Dec 7
Angel Winter Dickinson	Daughter of Debbi A Dickinson, CPBC	Dec 25	Dec 25
Junior Dickinson	Son of Debbi A Dickinson, CPBC	Dec 24	Dec 24
Wayne Ernst	Son of Julius and Doris Ernst; Brother of David Ernst	Jan 6	Dec 24
Rocky Fraccica	Son of Rocky and Sadie Fraccica	Sep 13	Dec 9
Kelly Gallagher	Daughter of Marigrace Gallagher	Dec 31	Nov 15
Kevin Garrison	Son of Kathleen Garrison; Brother of Anthony Garrison	Dec 2	Jan 16
Brett Harris	Son of Chester and Carol Kinsey, Jr.; Brother of Terry & Lisa	Dec 10	Jan 14
Justin Hilbert	Son of Robert and Joan Hilbert; Brother of Ashley & Kyle Hilbert	Dec 22	May 26
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh	Son of Wayne and Linda Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
Kimberly Kissel	Daughter of Michael and Gloria Kissel, Jr.; Sister of Colleen & Micheal Kissel & Lisa Zelko	Feb 6	Dec 22
Randy Krieg	Grandson of Gloria Perlis	Oct 15	Dec 1
Todd Kuhns	Son of Shannon Kuhns & Leonard Kuhns; Brother of Leonard & Londa Kuhns	Nov 9	Dec 15
Trever Landis	Son of Robin Landis; Brother of Marlea, Dana & Kelsey Landis	Apr 16	Dec 9
Brian Lentz	Son of Gary and Judy Lentz	Dec 9	Mar 10
Michael McLaughlin	Son of James and Julia McLaughlin; Brother of Matthew and Patrick McLaughlin	Mar 16	Dec 24
Cathy Ann Mertz	Daughter of Franklin and Lucille Reinhard; Sister of Cheryl Ann McCue	Oct 28	Dec 17
Doreen Meyers Ortiz	Daughter of Terry and Angeline Meyers; Sister of Dwayne T. Meyers	Dec 18	Jul 13
Jason Miller	Son of Phil and Pam Miller	Dec 10	Nov 28
Lisa Munjone	Daughter of Lorraine Parkhurst	Dec 5	Jun 11
Cody Myers	Son of David and Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Gianna Natale	Daughter of Daniel and Jaclyn Natale; Sister of Jaden Weller	Dec 26	Dec 26
Susette Olewine	Daughter of Louis and Joyce Szoke	Feb 17	Dec 2
Lauren Schneck	Daughter of James and Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
Steven Seibert	Son of Thomas and Eva Seibert; Brother of Nick & Krista Seibert; Grandson of Eva Juhasz	Jun 27	Dec 22
Matthew Snyder	Son of Robert and Elizabeth Snyder; Brother of Megan and Jesse Snyder	Dec 22	Jul 10

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

Child	Parents and Guardians, Siblings & Grandparents	Birthday	Anniv.
Jennifer Strohl	Daughter of Thomas and Christine Strohl	Apr 15	Dec 12
Travis Szerencits	Son of Craig and Cookie Harron	Mar 11	Dec 1
Travis "Bo" Tkach	Son of Jim and Sandi Tkach; Brother of Tristin & Tyler Tkach	Dec 25	Jul 20
Chad Wagner	Son of Carl and Pamela Fehnel; Brother of Cori	Mar 13	Dec 23
Gregory Weiland, Jr	Son of Robin Weiland; Brother of Rozalyn Weiland	Sep 23	Dec 12
Zachary Wieder	Son of Michael and Tracy Wieder; Brother of Brandi Hahn; Grandson of Linda Seyfried	Apr 13	Dec 21
Michael Zalewski	Son of Krzysztof and Jolanta Zalewska; Brother of Monika Baraket	Jan 7	Dec 6

Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends. Love Gifts are donations given in memory of a child or in memory of or in honor of a friend, relative or special person. These tax deductible donations enable the chapter to continue our mission of reaching out to the newly bereaved and providing ongoing support to all our members. To make a love gift donation please use form on page 11

We thank the following for their generous donations this month

<u>Contributor</u>	<u>In Memory of</u>
♥ Fern Gerth	Loren Hall <i>In loving memory of my son</i>
♥ Shirley Hamm	Timothy Hamm <i>Love You, Mom, Barb, Mike and Jeff</i>
♥ Elizabeth Arey	Patricia Arey <i>Forever loved, forever missed, Mother</i>
♥ Richard & Suzanne Hoffstetter	Jonathan Paul Hoffstetter <i>Dear Jon, Our 25th Christmas season without you. We all love and miss you</i>
♥ Edward & Olga Donchez	Barry E. Donchez <i>Honoring you for your birthday, Christmas holiday and your loss</i>
♥ David Bremmer	Hunter D. Bremmer <i>Happy Birthday! All my love, Dad</i>
♥ Gene, Dawn & Jamie Deong	David Delong <i>We love and miss you. 25 years is too long. Mom, Dad & Jamie</i>
♥ Linda & Larry Rothrock	Scott G. Rothrock <i>Merry Christmas Son</i>
♥ Salvatore & Mary Bartolotta	Salvatore C. Bartolotta <i>In Loving Memory</i>

Donations and Contributions

TCF Lehigh Valley Contributors

- ★ *The Lester Shafer Charitable Trust Foundation*
- ★ *Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown for meeting room and drinks*
- ★ *Giant Food Store Employees for United Way Contributions In Memory of David Todd Smith*
- ★ *Mary Ann Donuts, Allentown for meeting snacks*

- ★ *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.

Progress Handling Christmas

It was the third holiday season after my son died, and I was not yet sure what kind of Christmas it was going to be for me. As I stood in a department store line waiting to pick up a package, behind me in line, two women, strangers to each other, struck up a conversation having to do with the usual complaints that surface around the holiday season.

Each laden with packages, the two women began complaining (but not really) about how much too long their children's lists were, as usual. They compared how hard it had been to find "it" - whatever the in-thing was for boys and girls that year, about how tired they were, and about how different it was going to be next year. Their complaints were superficial, and you knew next year would be no different as they went about trying to fulfill as many dreams as was possible.

Had this been the year before, or the one before that, these mothers would have probably regretted being in line behind alive to buy for. I would have made them feel guilty for

me, for I would have had a need to punish them for their innocence and good luck, to remind them, unnecessarily I'm sure, how fortunate they were to have their children having done some good-natured complaining. Instead, this year I realized as I listened quietly that though I envied them their innocence and complacency, I had no need to punish them for my misfortune. Can you see how far I had come in a year? Some of my anger and frustration had subsided, and I didn't need to punish.

As I left I wished them both a Merry Christmas and silently thanked them for helping me discover what kind of Christmas it was going to be for me. I had made progress, but it had taken a year and this particular scenario for me to be able to judge it. I still missed my boy, but I was getting better.

If you don't have progress to recognize this year, maybe next year?

I hope so.

Mary Cleckley, TCF, Atlanta, GA



The following ceremony is used every month to open TCF, Lehigh Valley's support group meetings and we also use a sibling version 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 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.



When the time comes for lighting festive candles

Let them remind you not only of what you lost but what you had

Sascha

The Candle

Those who know the Children from today and the past
Remember sunsets and dawns that did not last
Compassionate friends light candles once a year
Giving hope to those immune to Christmas cheer

Sad faces light memories of a better day
Searching for the child that has gone away
Shaky hands can't get the flame to relax
Blurred vision barely sees the wick or the wax

One time our lights shined under a singular star
Then snow kisses were whispered upon us from afar
Too many to count bird buddies put on their treetop show
Singing songs to the heartbroken huddled down below

Those heavy hearts stuck on legs too weak to walk
Tells the world through red eyes there's no reason to talk
So many friendly flames flickered that very first year
The second one the same with maybe one less tear

Friends and family fondly attempted a heart felt rescue
Of the familiar life that they thought they once knew
But the soul that they sought was gone forever
Attached to the Child their love would never surrender

You have to get tough and you must move on
Suggestions and commands all rolled into one
Blank eyes ask directions and which way to go
Then realize if you haven't been there you really
don't know

So we listen to what they mean and not what they say
Get well in a hurry and be with us one more day
We applaud their innocence grateful for their cause
But membership in this club defies all human laws

Sometimes a child goes first the world must learn
They take cuts in that line where there is no return
Anger or guilt may find a new home
The price for that comfort is to be alone

This night our courageous candle fulfilled its
time-honored duty
Despite cousin wind's attempt to hide its simple beauty
You resisted a lonesome teardrop that had gone astray
Or sometimes salty streams falling uncontrollably your way

Dearest candle we know you are not one for sitting
very long
Though no movements you make are ever really wrong
You are still so unique within my stare
So infinite so elusive so exquisitely rare

Lights touched each other with silent sobbing felt so loud
Those dazzling diamonds defying the nights veiled shroud
Love helps our strength sneak through sad sack cracks
Inspired by desperate hope and a little wick and wax

This Christmas the Children that died too soon
Deserve a present as all children do
A little light from the softest smile
A promise to keep trying at least for a while.

Then someday when we meet once again
Life's lessons and tests no longer round the bend
A gift from the child with a light none can surpass
The most lovely lit candle no longer made of wick and wax

*Pal O'Donnell
TCF Livonia, MI
December 2006*

Dimming Lights

For most Chanukah is a joyous time
With dreidels, gifts and latkes we once had...
But since you have died
My heart is heavy and sad



Wherever you are my dearest Son...
I pray you are at peace...
Seeing the menorah lights
Giving me strength to get
Through these dim and dark eight days

Outwardly the Chanukah candles
Are glimmering bright...
But inside of me burns only
A shimmer of blurred light



Ceil Katz, TCF Southampton Chapter

Special Handling, Please..

Mary J. Pinkava

I was handed a package the other day.
 Wrapped securely to be mailed away.
 Attached to the outside as plain as could
 be. Was a simple note for all to see.

*Please rush through the holiday season;
 Too painful to open for any reason.
 Contained within, find one broken heart—
 Fragile, shattered, falling apart.*

*Tried to go shopping the other day;
 The hype of the season blew me away.
 Sat down to write cards,
 That was insane.*

*Couldn't find the list
 Or remember name.
 People say, "Come over."
 "Be of good cheer."
 "Celebrate the Holidays."
 "Prepare a New Year."*

*But my grief overwhelms me
 Like waves in the sea.
 Can they cope with my crying;
 An unsettled me*

*I don't have any holiday cheer,
 Decorations, traditions, big family meal.
 I can't do it this year.
 Do you know how I feel?*

*Guilty and frustrated!
 I've let everyone down!
 Our holiday celebrations
 Used to be the best ones in town!*

*So just ship me away
 Address unknown.
 When my grief is over,
 I might come back home.*

Signed Broken Heart

I just couldn't send Broken Heart away,
 So I jotted a note and left it that day.

*Dear Broken Heart:
 The death of your loved one
 Has forced you to start
 A new kind of living
 That's hard on the heart.*

*Undecorating your life
 Of its angers and fears
 Is not easy to do
 Without the shedding of tears.*

*And untying your guilt
 Can release a bundle of strife.
 Questions are stirred up
 About living and life.*

*Don't be concerned now
 With invitations, big meals.
 See how the little stuff
 Handles and feels.*

*Let the love of your family,
 Neighbors, or friends
 Uphold and sustain you
 When you're at loose ends.*

*Most are eager to be there,
 Willing to share.
 Tell them your need,
 And they'll show you they care.*

*They'll take you shopping,
 Write cards, even cook.
 Let that stuff go now,
 Get yourself off the hook.*

*You need time for healing,
 You've much work to do.
 Your heart needs mending.
 Give that gift to YOU.*

*Take a walk, read a book,
 Try a new hair style.
 Make sure it's relaxing,
 Makes you pause, rest while.*

*When Holiday invitations
 Knock at your door.
 Don't say "Yes" to five
 When you only want four.*

*If you want to remember
 Your loved one who died,
 Plant a tree, give a gift,
 Let your heart be your guide.*

*This season of wonder
 Can bring you relief
 If you're willing to unwrap
 Your tears and your grief.*

*Please listen, Broken Heart,
 Stay close and please dare
 To open your package a
 And let others care.*

*Signed,
 Your Friend,
 C.U.Soon*

Handling The Holidays

Holidays can be a painful time for the bereaved, a reminder of what once was but can never exist again. Here are some suggestions for those struggling to survive the season.

Acknowledge that this year is different and that it will hurt, but you will survive. Take one day at a time, one hour at a time. Accept the gift of your healing tears.

Do something in memory of your loved one. For example, give a memorial gift of flowers, books or money to your church or library.

Share the holidays with another bereaved family; take a meal to a shut-in; or volunteer at a local charity. Doing something for someone less fortunate can be healing... whether it is a phone call, card, or visit, reach out to someone in need this season.

Seek help from your faith.

Light a candle as a reminder of your loved one, as a celebration of his/her life. Let the love you shared shine through. Let the warmth of their spirit be present during the holidays.

Set aside time to remember your loved one, either alone or with others. Cherish the time you had together. The goal of grief is to heal. It is through remembering that we heal, not through trying to forget.

Take a break from your grieving. Pamper yourself with a bubble bath; go to a concert, museum; sports event; buy yourself a special present, read a book, dine out. Relax.

Balance your time spent with others with time spent alone.

Give yourself permission to change family traditions. There is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holidays. Follow your heart. Hold on to Hope.

Debbie Dickinson; Naperville, IN

To Bereaved Grandparents

concerning the holidays

- ⊗ Know that your grief over the loss of your grandchild is legitimate. You have the need and right to grieve.
- ⊗ Learn about the grief process, not only so you will know that what you are experiencing is normal, but it will help you to know that your grieving child is not "going crazy."
- ⊗ Find someone with whom you can share your thoughts and feelings about your grandchild's death.
- ⊗ Know that the holiday will be difficult for you as well as your grieving child. Don't expect too much of yourself this year.
- ⊗ Your grieving child will be especially needing of you this year. Find ways to include memories and/or memorabilia of the dead child in you family holiday ritual. You may even want to change some of your traditional holiday plans this year.
- ⊗ Know that your children who have not lost a child may be uncomfortable with whatever you do, but explain to them how necessary it is for your grieving child.
- ⊗ Know that however you plan this year's holiday arrangements it will not be as it has been in the past. The holidays will never be the same because your grandchild will never be there again. Know too that it does get easier as the years go by.
- ⊗ Take this opportunity to cement a very special relationship with your grieving child by being sensitive to their needs during this holiday season.

Margaret Gerner, MSW, TCF St. Louis, MO

*May the Memories
of this Season Come
on Gentle Wings
to Bring You
Love and Peace*

A Word To Our Friends

By Sue Heisten, 1981 Columbia, MO

The "Holiday Season," whether it be Chanukah or Christmas, is a time of peace and happiness; a time of family gatherings, and a bond of closeness felt more strongly than on any other holiday of the year.

There are also very different emotions surfacing now for those of us that have experienced the death of a child, a sibling, or a spouse. We may be angry, depressed, fearful, or we may just not care. There may be deep consuming anguish for those having their "first" Christmas or Chanukah; to a few tears and the remembrance of "how it used to be," for those experiencing the second, third, or twenty-third holiday.

There are times that it's too painful to tell how we feel or why we act a certain way. Sometimes we don't know ourselves. We can't tell you why today; hearing a song, seeing a child going into a store, seeing his favorite food; should bring memories and tears, when yesterday it didn't.

We may want to change things this holiday, do things differently than we have in the past. This is our way of coping with the holiday. Please take our feelings into consideration when making your plans. For some of us, shopping, buying gifts, can be difficult or extremely painful. It seems you always have to pass, or find yourself in that section of the store where you no longer need to be.

Small tasks that we did last year, this year remain undone. They may not seem important, we may not have the energy, or they are just too painful to do. "Put up a tree, I just can't. We used to do it together. I just can't use those ornaments." Please don't tell us to turn off our memories, to snap out of it, that he/she is dead and life has to go on. But our love for them doesn't end with death. All we have left of a very special part of our lives are the memories, and they return at unexpected times, filling us with intense longing for what is no more. Yes, we fully realize that he/she is dead, gone forever, and that's what hurts.

Please have patience with us. Try to understand why we are acting or feeling the way we are today. With a small word or gesture let us know it's alright with you for us to love, to cry, to remember. We aren't doing it to make you uncomfortable or to gain sympathy. We are just trying to cope. Please help us "make it through" this holiday season.

Sibling Page

Things Will Never Be the Same Again

Christmas will never be the same again.

Life will never be the same again!

I remember my last Christmas with my brother, Chris. He was a senior in high school, recently accepted to USC, the college I was to graduate from five years later, without him. It was going to be his last Christmas at home, before he went off to college. What we didn't realize was that it really was his "last Christmas at home." He gave me sapphire earrings, the ones I wear everyday of my life. I can't even remember the gift I bought him, but I do have a picture of us in our customary places on the sofa; our arms around each other, pajamas on, smiles so big they stretched across the room.. .like a frozen moment in time.

Life goes on for the rest of the world, but we, the mourners, find ourselves back at the starting gate, beginning life over again. We have to learn how to live a new way, without a significant relationship - our brothers and sisters. This is not an easy task, and the challenge of the holidays is upon us once again. For my family, each Christmas since our last with Chris in 1988 has been a trial and error process.

Traveling, changing traditions, going back to old traditions - all forced efforts and struggled attempts to "make it through the holidays." Personally, I have found more comfort in embracing the old traditions rather than running away from them. We, as a family, have formed new traditions that blend with our old ones. We have breakfast on Christmas morning with another bereaved family which has become a comforting new custom. While opening gifts, I prefer to sit alone on the sofa Chris and I used to share because I just can't imagine it any other way. It took us a couple of years before we felt like decorating the house, or having guests over again, and before we could do a lot of the old traditions.

But when we as a family were ready, we did them - but always a little bit differently.

We now have a collection of music note and angel ornaments that fill their own tree, and each one is in Chris' memory. This year we decided to fly to Texas to be with my sister's family, because none of us wanted to be alone. So we continue the trial and error process.

No matter, what you decide for yourself to find your

way through the holidays, I do hope that you create a way to include your sibling in your plans. Write a poem, share a story, paint a picture, sing or play a song, eat their favorite ice cream, or bake goodies in their memory. Even purchase a gift that you would have bought for your sibling and give it in his or her memory to a special person.

By finding a personal way of incorporating each of our siblings during the holidays - and every day - they will continue to influence not only our lives, but the people with whom we come in contact, thus continuing their legacy and memory for years to come.

My Christmas wish for each of you this holiday season is that you will have an abundance of preciously wrapped gifts to give and to be received from each one within your family. Not CD's, or toys, or books, or things - but memories of your brother or sister, ones that are special and thought of often, or ones that were near to being forgotten. Share these with someone, if you can, and have them, share their memories with you. In this way, our brothers and sisters will remain near in our thoughts and hearts as we continue to make our way through this adventure called life.

By Michelle Dyck Pasadena, CA

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

To Volunteer contact
Gene Delong @
610-837-7924

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.*

Submission Deadlines: Winter - Dec 1st; Spring - March 1st; Summer - June 1st; Fall - Sept 1st

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 to be published in. Deadlines listed above. Late submissions will be published in the next edition

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 specify what change(s) are (i.e. correction, sibling name addition etc...) Use another piece of paper if necessary

Gifts

To ourselves we can grant the gift of acceptance by realizing that our grief is a necessary healing process.

To our families we can extend the gift of empathy by remembering that they, too, hurt.

To our missing children we can bestow the gift of homage by determining to work through grief so that we may live life to the fullest.

Candy McLaughlin, TCF Minneapolis MN

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

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.