



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

Volume 34 Issue 4

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Fall/ Winter

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**The Compassionate Friends is an international non-profit self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families after the death of a child.**

***Our Mission:*** When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

***Our Vision:*** Everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

## **Meetings & Events**

### **Meetings**

Due concerns regarding Covid-19 we do not have use of our indoor meeting place and will not until it is deemed safe to meet in an enclosed space. We have however meet twice at an outdoor venue and depending on the weather we will endeavor to do so again in October. Another possibility we have is to meet virtually. Meetings are open to bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Participation is confidential and voluntary. In regards to December's Candle Lighting Program we are exploring options at this time.

***Note: We will contact all interested members about upcoming meetings etc... prior to meeting dates. To be put on the list to be contacted call or text the newsletter editor at 484-891-0823***

**The 24th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting** will be held this year on Sunday, December 13, 2020. This 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 for 1 hour 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 Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Formal and informal candle lightings are conducted as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

Participants may observe the event at home with family or attend a local gathering. Visit the Compassionate Friends National website, [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) for a list of local candle lighting gatherings. The page also hosts a Remembrance book for the event and you are invited to post a message in the book which will be available, during the event. The Remembrance Book will be open to post a message Tuesday, December 1st, through Monday, December 14th. Photos can be posted on TCF's Worldwide Candle Lighting Facebook page.

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**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
Only Child -	Shelly Garst 484-241-5396
Addiction -	Nancy Howe 484-863-4324
Suicide -	John & Maria Szabo 610-866-5468
Homicide -	Ginger Renner 610-967-5113

**To volunteer as a  
phone friend  
Contact the  
newsletter editor**

**TCF Online Support**

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
Click on "Online Support" under  
the "Find Support" tab

**Important notice from the editor**

*Dear Readers,*

*Circumstances in my life have changed and I can no longer devote the time to the newsletter as I have for the past 15 years. From this point forward this publication will be a informational newsletter only (no articles or poems).*

*I don't expect my situation to improve. Therefore I would prefer, while I am able, to help someone transition into this position before I need to step down completely.*

*Interested parties please contact me as soon as possible at 484-891-0823*

*Thank You,  
Kathleen Collins*

*P.S. There are many other volunteer opportunities available within the chapter. Most of the people who are responsible for the day to day operations of this chapter are willing to turn over the reins. Please consider volunteering. The future of this chapter is in your hands.*

**Newsletter Notes**

**This newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter** 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](mailto:TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com) or by mail: TCF News Editor, 2971 Pheasant Dr., Northampton, PA 18067

**NOTE: 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 individuals from the mailing list.

## Love Gifts

Love Gifts are tax deductible. They enable us to reach out to newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members. They may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Please use form in this newsletter to donate.

*We thank the following for their generosity*

Contributor	Loved One
♥ David Bremmer	<b>Hunter Bremmer</b> <i>Happy Big 40. All my love, Dad</i>
♥ Doris Hosler	<b>Debbie. Sweeney</b> <i>Happy 67th Birthday! Love always, Mom, Donna &amp; Dave</i>
♥ Jack and Nancy Bosky	<b>Kevin Bosky</b> <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Yvonne Hude & Nancy Kornafel	<b>Molly Hude</b> <i>Happy 32nd Birthday wishes! Always thinking of you. Love Mom, Dad &amp; Grammy</i>
♥ Don and Sue Southgate	<b>Troy Southgate</b> <i>We love and miss you very much. Mom, Dad &amp; Martin</i>
♥ Larry and Linda Rothrock	<b>Scott G. Rothrock</b> <i>You are in our hearts forever</i>
♥ Gene DeLong & Jamie DeLong	<b>Dawn DeLong &amp; David DeLong</b> <i>While we miss you terribly our minds rest easy knowing you and Dave are reconnected. Love Gene and Jamie</i>
♥ Pat Andrew	<b>Jill Patricia Harris</b> <i>We love and miss you and Pops. Mom, Jeff, Sam &amp; Alex</i>

## Donations & Contributions

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ★ <b>Sacred Heart Hospital, Allentown</b><br><i>for meeting room and drinks</i>                      | ★ <b>The Matt Kush Foundation</b><br><i>In Memory of Matt Kush 8/1985 - 2/2001</i> |
| ★ <b>Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions</b><br><i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | ★ <b>Aetna Payroll Contributors</b>  |
| ★ <b>Mary Ann Donuts, Allentown</b><br><i>for meeting snacks</i>                                     | ★ <b>United Way Payroll Contributors</b>   |
| ★ <b>Everyone who volunteers their time and talents to the chapter and helping with the meetings</b> |  |

## Our Children Remembered

*Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts*

Birthdays and Anniversaries		Birth	Anniv.
<b>John Ashner, Jr.</b> - Son of John & Grace Ashner		Jun 22	Nov 8
<b>Kevin Bosky</b> - Son of Jack & Janet Bosky; Grandson of Jack & Nancy Bosky		Jan 28	Oct 4
<b>Hunter Bremmer</b> - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer		Dec 12	Jul 27
<b>Brian Burke</b> - Son of Rich & Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke		Jan 3	Oct 9
<b>Jessica Coe</b> - Daughter of Randy & Diane Coe; Sister of Allison Coe		Aug 13	Oct 7
<b>Christopher Cole</b> - Son of Donald Cole; Brother of Lauren Cole		Oct 10	Sep 10
<b>Michael Conelias</b> - Son of Trent & Joanne Conelias		Dec 10	Aug 1
<b>John Counterman, III</b> - Brother of Theresa Legarski		Sep 30	Nov 2
<b>Christopher Daud</b> - Son of Marie Daud		Nov 4	Sep 16
<b>David DeLong</b> - Son of Gene DeLong & The late Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong		Oct 23	Dec 7
<b>Wayne Ernst</b> - Son of Doris Ernst & The Late Julius Ernst		Jan 6	Dec 24
<b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James		Aug 7	Oct 21
<b>Benjamin Fry</b> - Son of John & Cynthia Chryst; Twin Brother of Jeff Fry; Brother of the late Peter & Paul Fry; Grandson of Charles & Rose Giltner		Oct 6	Mar 14
<b>Kevin Garrison</b> - Son of Kathleen Garrison		Dec 2	Jan 16
<b>Erik Gaughran</b> - Son of Rita Gaughran		Mar 29	Dec 10

# Our Children Remembered

*Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts*

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Chelsie Graham</b> - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
<b>James "Jim" Gum</b> - Son of Sherwood & June Gum; Brother of Deborah Martini	Nov 21	May 1
<b>Ryan Hamell</b> - Son of Greg & Jeanette Hamell	Apr 6	Nov 23
<b>Brett Harris</b> - Son of Chester & Carol Kinsey, Jr.; Brother of Terry & Lisa	Dec 10	Jan 14
<b>Jill Harris</b> - Daughter of Fred & Pat Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
<b>Heather Hawn</b> - Daughter of Mike & Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
<b>Jennifer Hendershot</b> - Daughter of Candi Lynn; Sister of Kevin Strohl	Jan 13	Dec 12
<b>Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh</b> - Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
<b>Molly Hude</b> - Daughter of Rex & Yvonne Hude; Grand daughter of Nancy Kornafel	Nov 2	Jul 2
<b>Jeanne Hurley</b> - Daughter of Stephen & Jeannette Viglione; Sister of Michele Yankowy & Robert Wambold, Jr.	Oct 12	Aug 13
<b>Jordon Hyndman</b> - Son of Robin Hyndman; Brother of Shawna & Briana Hyndman	Nov 14	May 23
<b>Jonathan Keller</b> - Son of Dennis & Lori Keller; Brother of Amy Keller	Oct 25	Mar 23
<b>Audrey King Koch</b> - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
<b>Kimberly Kissel</b> - Daughter of Michael & Gloria Kissel, Jr.; Sister of Colleen & Micheal Kissel & Lisa Zelko	Feb 6	Dec 22
<b>Matthew Kolb</b> - Son of Debbie Kolb & The Late Bob Kolb	Nov 26	Sep 6
<b>Richard Kulik</b> - Son of Dolores Kulik; Brother of Christina Schantzenbach & Michael Kulik	Sep 5	Oct 27
<b>Charles Kunsman, Jr</b> - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & late David Kunsman	Sep 18	Nov 19
<b>Trever Landis</b> - Son of Robin Landis; Brother of Marlea, Dana & Kelsey Landis	Apr 16	Dec 9
<b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
<b>Paul Levine</b> - Son of Louisa Levine; Brother of Gregory, Mary & Philip Levine	Sep 28	Oct 31
<b>Nathan Loicano</b> - Brother of Andrea Loiacano	Nov 17	Nov 18
<b>Andrea Luecke</b> - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
<b>John Luzenski</b> - Son of John & Audrey Luzenski; Brother of Judy & Jeffrey Luzenski	Oct 6	Oct 28
<b>Anne Marie Mabus Heater</b> - Daughter of Wayne & Frances Mabus; Sister of Steven Mabus	Jan 7	Nov 25
<b>Michael McLaughlin</b> - Son of James & Julia McLaughlin; Brother of Matthew & Patrick McLaughlin	Mar 16	Dec 24
<b>Emma McNulty</b> - Daughter of Jessica & Susan Katzebeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
<b>Cathy Ann Mertz</b> - Daughter of Franklin & Lucille Reinhard; Sister of The late Denise Deiter	Oct 28	Dec 17
<b>Doreen Meyers Ortiz</b> - Daughter of Terry & Angeline Meyers; Sister of Dwayne T. Meyers	Dec 18	Jul 13
<b>Jacob Miller</b> - Son of William R & Caroline P Miller	Nov 15	Nov 16
<b>Suzanne Miller</b> - Daughter of Russell & Margaret Billig	Nov 28	Sep 28
<b>Glenn Miller, Jr.</b> - Son of Lin Miller; Brother of Lorrie Woolever	Nov 20	Aug 4
<b>Cody Myers</b> - Son of David & Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal & Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
<b>Wayne Petzold</b> - Son of David & Joan Petzold, Sr.; Brother of Amy, Dave & Father of Katie Petzold	Aug 20	Oct 8
<b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
<b>Deanna Renner</b> - Daughter of Ginger Renner & The late Merle Renner	Oct 11	Oct 22
<b>Lydia Rice Cobb</b> - Daughter of Virginia Rice	Sep 27	Oct 10
<b>Scott Rothrock</b> - Son of Larry & Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
<b>Jason Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
<b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
<b>Dean Schuler</b> - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
<b>Steven Seibert</b> - Son of Thomas & Eva Seibert; Brother of Nick & Krista Seibert; Grandson of Eva Juhasz	Jun 27	Dec 22
<b>Anthony Sisonick</b> - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
<b>Matthew Solderitch</b> - Son of Brenda Solderitch & the Late Stephen Solderitch Sr.; Brother of Tina Saginario	Nov 24	Nov 3
<b>Troy Southgate</b> - Son of Don & Sue Southgate; Brother of Martin Southgate	Feb 25	Oct 30
<b>Michael Stocker</b> - Son of Calvin & Kay Stocker; Brother of Megan Fibrick	Oct 14	Jan 26
<b>Debra Sweeney</b> - Daughter of Richard & Doris Hosler; Sister of Donna Mallard	Nov 16	Jan 5
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Chad Wagner</b> - Son of Carl & Pamela Fehnel; Brother of Cori	Mar 13	Dec 23
<b>Gilbert Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	Oct 22
<b>Darren Whipple</b> - Brother of Jean Marie Yurkovitch	Oct 27	Nov 2
<b>Christopher Williamson</b> - Son of Chris & Kim Williamson; Brother of the late Christina Joy Williamson	Nov 12	Nov 12
<b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael & Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22
<b>Kenneth Zellner</b> - Son of Kenneth & Barbara Zellner	Oct 11	Nov 15

# Keeping Your Child Present

By Peggy Krist

Death ended Jonathan's life but it didn't end his relationship with me. I learned to keep him present in my life by doing outreach in his name.

Countless books have been written on the process of mourning and what's become known as the Kubler-Ross five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Few books mention the stage of giving as part of the healing process. It was in this last stage, memorializing our son through philanthropy, that we finally healed.

After our son's car accident we had no idea how to deal with our son's death or how to honor his memory. We just knew we had to get out of the house. We stumbled into the nonprofit world when our family lawyer and friend steered us in that direction. Little by little we reshaped his presence on earth by doing small meaningful acts in his name, things Jonathan would be doing if he were still alive. Our non-profit took shape in a very grassroots way. Jonathan was a freshman in college, a talented musician and committed social activist. He had a couple of unfinished projects he left behind; raising monies for a well in Africa and collecting band instruments for a school in rural North Carolina. We were given a chance to pass Jonathan's future on to those less fortunate by simply picking up where he left off. We raised money to build a Playpump well in Malawi and eventually we delivered those instruments to Gaston College Prep in N.C.

Beyond the satisfaction we experience by helping others, I feel rewarded by one simple gesture. Thirteen years later, I experience the joy of hearing Jonathan's name spoken. Because of our outreach, our son is still included in conversations; in a new idea, an act of giving. He is present.

I gained perspective on our loss from the insightful writings of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He explained that God kept the "gap" – Jonathan's absence – empty, so we can still feel our son's presence. Over time I started connecting the small yet significant acts that happened in those empty gaps. As I made the connections, our outreach took on new meaning and I began to end my mourning. This is how I found my way back from grief: I kept my heart and mind together and did the work our son didn't finish.

***Peggy Krist** spent 30 years as a photo editor and business partner in her husband Bob's international photography career. She managed his stock photo library and publishing company, while raising their three sons, Matthew, Brian and Jonathan. An inveterate journal keeper, Peggy has been writing since her college years, but didn't take it seriously until the loss of her youngest son, Jonathan, in 2006. She was inspired to write **Grief to Generosity** to share with other bereaved parents how the "stage of giving" helped her heal and keep her son present. Today Peggy works with her family on behalf of the Jonathan D. Krist*

*Foundation, based in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Her responsibilities include program development, interviewing students and working with motivated people who share the same vision.*



## One November Day

By Sherry Brown, TCF Lehigh Valley, PA  
Submitted by Brenda Solderitch  
in memory of son Matthew

Everything we do  
Changes our life in some way,  
This happened to me  
One November day,  
That's when I had  
My son; You see,  
It was a joyful  
Time for me.  
As time went on  
And years went by,  
He became his own person  
A wonderful guy

Those who knew Him  
Loved Him so much,  
It amazes me;  
All the lives  
He touched,  
For those of you;  
That he never met,  
He is one person you'd  
Never Forget,  
He's in God's Hands  
For He passed away,  
But I'll always remember  
That one November Day



# This Crappy Club Called Child Loss

By Angela Miller

Sometimes grief makes me feel like I'm losing my mind. Like my brain has been hijacked. No, really.

A few weeks ago, I read the beginning of a sentence over and over again about twenty or thirty times. It took me almost that long to figure out why my brain couldn't make sense of it. Then—BAM—it hit me. Upside the head and then some. The reason I had to keep reading it ad nauseum is because these four little words will never again be true for me. I'll never be able to say them again in reference to myself. Ever.

You ready for the sentence?

"As a non-bereaved parent..."

"As a non-bereaved parent..."

"As a non-bereaved parent..."

"As a non-bereaved parent..."

...Slap.

There it was: reality. Ouch. Apparently even reading can be a possible trigger. What I'd give to be a non-bereaved parent for even another minute or two. Two glorious minutes of having all my children here with me. Two minutes of the living nightmare, gone. Two freeing minutes of being "normal" again. If only I could say those four fabulous words. If only they could be true for me. If only I still belonged to the "normal" motherhood club. The non-bereaved kind. The glorious kind. The kind I was a part of BEFORE. It's so lonely being stuck in this one. FOREVER...

Does it ever just hit you like that? Out of nowhere? You can be trekking along "fine," going about your day, living life, and then all of a sudden you remember: Oh yeah I'm forever part of this crappy club called child loss. Shit. Shit. Shit.

It's true that you find life again. Or life finds you. It's true that joy and happiness find you again too. It's true that to most, you look oh-so-normal on the outside.

If only broken hearts were visible. If only grief could be treated like a broken bone that needs time to set and heal. If only compassion was a universal re-

sponse to those who are hurting. . . .

The truth is, no matter how much you're living, no matter how much healing your heart has done, no matter how far you run, no matter how long it's been: you're still always and forever part of a club that no one wants to join; one you can never, ever leave. The thought of it is so terrifying that it leaves the verbose, speechless. Most can't handle thinking about it for even a millisecond. Or less.

It's that horrifying— that unspeakable. That nightmarish.

I can't even read the beginning of a simple sentence without being reminded. That I am "other." Forever booted from "Planet Non-Bereaved." Forever part of "Planet Bereaved Parent."

You can't even get kicked out. Ever.

Seriously. What kind of club is this?!

It's got to be one of the most horrific clubs on earth.

Revised: It is THE most horrific club on earth. . . .

That's it, I guess. Pretty much sums it up.

I want to leave this club, yet I can't. Ever.

That thought is a little too overwhelming at times.

Or, almost always. . . .

Sometimes, when the weight of bereaved parenthood hits me like a ton of bricks, I've found that hearing two little words can make it all a little bit better:

"Me too."

"Me too."

"Me too."

"Me too."

"Me too."

Knowing I'm not alone is what makes the unbearable, bearable.

Solidarity heals. It binds the broken.

I'm certain it's the one sure thing that always will.

...

*Angela Miller is an internationally known author and speaker on grief and loss. She is the best-selling author of *You Are the Mother of All Mothers*, and founder of the award winning grief organization, *A Bed For My Heart*.*

*Memories are like threads of gold,  
They never tarnish or grow old*

*Author Unknown*

## Standing

By Julie Short,  
TCF Southeastern Illinois

People say  
"Oh you are doing so well,  
you are so strong,  
you are an inspiration!"

We do not feel strong.  
We feel shaken to the core,  
Saddened beyond belief,  
Pain beyond comprehension,  
Forever changed.

What do they see  
that we cannot see?

That a horrible storm  
unexpectedly ripped  
through our lives and we are  
still standing

They are amazed  
We are paralyzed  
Still Standing

## Mosaic

Since your death I am all  
broken bits and sharp  
edges. My goal is not to be  
whole again. My goal is to  
polish up these broken bits  
and put them together in a  
new way to make  
something beautiful of my  
life as a monument to you  
and to our love.

Grief Speaks Out

## Our Children Did Exist

By Betty Schreiber,  
TCF N.E. Ohio

I've lost two children,  
I hear myself say.  
And that person I'm talking to,  
just turns away.

Now why did I tell them,  
I don't understand?  
It wasn't for sympathy,  
or to get a helping hand.

I just want them to know,  
we've lost something dear.  
I want them to know,  
that our children were here.

They left something behind,  
which no one can see.  
They made just two people  
into a family.

So, if I've upset you, I'm sorry as  
can be.

You'll have to forgive me,  
I could not resist.

I just wanted you to know,  
that our children did exist.

## An Empty Chair

By Daniel Yoffee, Unknown Chapter  
In Memory of my brother, Alan

The first wedding was two years  
after Alan, my twin-brother,  
passed away. My second oldest  
brother was getting married. I  
was waiting for the question,  
"When was I going to get mar-  
ried?" I was never asked so I  
couldn't use my prepared re-  
sponse, "When Alan could be  
my best man."

I thought if I did get married I  
would have an empty chair next  
to me. If Alan couldn't be my  
best man, I didn't want anyone.  
My brother's name would ap-  
pear in the program (that he  
would have designed) as honor-  
ary best man.

This year I turned thirty-six, it  
was my sixth birthday without  
Alan. At the restaurant we had  
made a mistake, the reservation  
had been made for one too  
many. I had ended up sitting  
next to an empty chair.

Although I thought, I was doing  
better, no longer crying at family  
events. I now realize that I will  
not have an empty chair at my  
wedding, if I can ever bring my-  
self to get married without Alan  
being there. The loss I feel will  
always be there but it's much  
worse seeing an empty chair.

## Grief Work

Author Unknown

Grief work is like winding a ball  
of wool. You start with an end  
and wind. Then the ball slips  
through your fingers and rolls  
across the floor, some of your  
work is undone, but not all. You  
pick it up and start over again,  
but never do you begin at the  
end of the wool. The ball never  
completely unwinds; you've  
made some progress.



## The Holidays Are Coming

By Marge Frankenberg TCF  
Arlington Heights, IL

The Holidays Are Coming, The Holidays are coming!" Most bereaved parents make that observation with the same sense of fear and dread that Chicken Little had when he announced, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" We view Christmas or Hanukkah differently than the rest of the world. In our minds they become great trials to be endured. In my opinion, this trial is tougher than birthdays or death anniversaries. This is the time when love abounds. The family (and extended family) all gather together, coming from near and far, to share in this love. The only trouble with this happy scene is that our child is missing. He or she has traveled too far from us to come for the holidays! We can't buy gifts for a photograph or hug and kiss a memory. The emptiness that this creates in us cannot be filled, no matter how many relatives gather by our hearth. To add to the pain, most well-meaning friends and relatives feel that the best way to handle the problem is to pretend that it doesn't exist. They never mention the one person that is on the minds and in the hearts of everyone. We found out early on that it is not possible to keep the "presence" of our child out of a family gathering. Trying to do so makes everyone uncomfortable and causes us as parents to feel disloyal. The first Christmas after our son died, we did it "their" way. Never again! Now we make sure that he is very much a part of our holiday. For

starters, we decided once again to hang all three stockings. We don't fill them, but just seeing them all hanging together is right for us. The tree was very important to Blake. Every year he took the responsibility of stringing the lights for us. Now it is important to us to see that Blake has a tree. We have a very special one, about 3 feet tall, that we weight heavily at the bottom. We decorate it with weatherproof ornaments and place it at his grave. We leave the tree there until spring so it can mark the gravesite when the snows are deep. We also have a lovely candle that we burn on special days. This is our way of including our missing son in the family circle. But most important, we talk about him. We don't do it obsessively, but we don't hesitate to recall memories of him as often as we recall those of other children in the family. Because we talk of him in an easy and natural manner, the rest of the family has taken our cue. They now bring up his name naturally. It is all so much more comfortable than the way we tried to handle it that first year. Another couple in our chapter had a wonderful idea for the first holiday after their daughter died. Their greatest fear was that no one would mention her, so they compiled an album of her pictures and casually left it out on the coffee table. It wasn't long before people were looking through it, recalling favorite memories of her, and the ice was broken. There must be so many other ways that you can make your child a part of your holiday—ways that seem right and comfortable for you. You may choose to keep your thoughts private rather than

share them with others. But the most important thing to remember is that the choice is yours. Do what makes you comfortable, not what others think should make you comfortable. If you follow the dictates of your heart and that gives you comfort, those around you will see that it is so and follow your lead.

## My Christmas Angel

By Carolyn Dickerson  
TCF and BP, Augusta, GA

Christmas is coming,  
Oh, Lord let me hide.  
I don't want to be happy  
My child has just died.

Everyone is laughing  
So full of good cheer.  
Can't they see my sad eyes?  
I've lost something so dear.

I hear them all singing.  
They're having such fun.  
How can I survive this?  
I just lost my son.

Then almost like magic,  
A small voice in my ear...  
"Can't wait till you  
put the tree up, Mom,  
I'll, be your Angel this year."

When I  
close my eyes  
I see you

When I  
open my eyes  
I miss you



## 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: Issue 1 - Dec 1<sup>st</sup>; Issue 2 - March 1<sup>st</sup>; Issue 3 - June 1<sup>st</sup>; Issue 4 - Sept 1<sup>st</sup>

Contributor Name (this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)

Address

Phone

Mail to:

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS,  
 LEHIGH VALLEY  
 C/O BRENDA SOLDERITCH  
 415 S. HOKENDAUQUA DR  
 NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

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 gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Lehigh Valley ☐ Easton *Note: Please mail Easton gifts to the address below*

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

**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

## 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 to be listed (We publish only Parents/Guardians, Grandparents and Sibling names)

**\* IMPORTANT:** If this is a information change, specify what change(s) are ( i.e. correction, sibling name addition etc...) Use another piece of paper if necessary



## THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY

Phone: 484-891-0823

E-mail: [tcflehighvalley@gmail.com](mailto:tcflehighvalley@gmail.com)

### **Other Local TCF Chapters and Support Groups**

**TCF Carbon County Chapter** - 1st Tuesday 7-9 pm Leaders - Dave & Lora Krum, Phone: 484-719-6753 Email: [tcfcarboncounty@gmail.com](mailto:tcfcarboncounty@gmail.com)

**TCF Easton Chapter**- 2nd Thursday 7 - 9 pm Leaders John & Maria Szabo, Phone: 610-866-5468 Email: [szabojanos1@verizon.net](mailto:szabojanos1@verizon.net)

**TCF Quakertown Chapter** - 2nd Tuesday 7:30 - 9 pm Phone: 267-380-0130, Email: [contact@tcfquakertownpa.org](mailto:contact@tcfquakertownpa.org)

**TCF Pocono Chapter** - 1st Monday 7:00pm Leader Teresa Myers Phone: 570-350-6695, Email: [tcfpoconochapter@gmail.com](mailto:tcfpoconochapter@gmail.com)

**GRASP** (grief recovery after substance passing)  
Contact: Nancy Howe 484-863-4324; 484-788-9440; [nancyhowe@ymail.com](mailto:nancyhowe@ymail.com) or Jenny Kemps - 610-442-8490

## **The Compassionate Friends Credo**

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**W**e need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

*We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.*