



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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



Volume 36 Issue 11

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**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.

#### **Meetings**

Our chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church in Cherryville, PA

To be notified of meetings call or text the newsletter editor at 484-891-0823. We will add you to the notification list and you will be notified of upcoming meetings

Meetings are open to bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

Note: In order to meet safely all attendees must agree to the following

- Face masks required for unvaccinated or partially vaccinated persons. Face masks are optional, but appreciated for those that are fully vaccinated and boosted.
- Do not attend if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to Covid, tested positive in the last 14 days or have a new unexplained rash
- Chairs will be preset to maintain social distancing
- No food is allowed

#### **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 walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our 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.

#### **Telephone Friends**

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who cares and understands between meetings. To help we maintain a list of telephone friends. During these times the following members are available to listen, share and offer what support they can.

Infant Loss - Kim Szep -	610-730-3111
Only Child - Shelly Garst -	484-241-5396
Addiction - Nancy Howe -	484-863-4324
Homicide - Ginger Renner -	610-967-5113

*To volunteer as a telephone friend contact the newsletter editor*



#### **TCF National Support Resources**

The TCF National website has over 35 private Facebook pages and a number of moderated chatrooms. To register for the FB pages or chat rooms go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on the find support tab and then choose online communities.

## Newsletter Notes

**This Newsletter** comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter. We hope that it will be of some comfort to you on your grief journey.

**We welcome original stories and poetry from our members.**

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor (address listed above)

**If you move** please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

### Newsletter Editor Contact

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## The Compassionate Friends

### Worldwide Candle Lighting

Join us on December 11, 2022

"...that their light  
may always shine."



**TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting - Sunday, Dec. 11.** We encourage everyone to participate in this very special event, when bereaved families join together from around the world and light candles for 1 hour at 7:00 p.m. local time in memory of all children gone too soon.

#### To Participate you may observe the event :

- **At home with family**
- **Attend a local gathering** - Our chapter will not be holding a wwcl event but other nearby chapters may. You can visit TCF National's website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) for a list of events. The link for the worldwide candle lighting can be found on the bottom of any page under the Menu heading
- **Join The Compassionate Friends Virtual Candle Lighting.** Pre-registration required. To join the virtual event visit TCF National website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org), scroll to the bottom any page click on the link for the Worldwide Candle Lighting under the Menu heading you will find a link on this page to register. After you register you will receive details for the event via email

## Shared Thoughts on Celebrating The Holidays While Grieving

For many of us, fall means the time of year to be in awe of all the beautiful colors of nature, and to give thanks for our many blessings. When our child or sibling dies, our eyes still see nature's beauty, but our hearts are in too much pain to feel, appreciate, or enjoy anything. The Thanksgiving holiday seems almost unacceptable to many newly bereaved. It is very difficult to give thanks, when one of our greatest blessings has been taken from us, and the gut-wrenching pain permeates our very being.

We now know how precious the gift of life is. We are more appreciative of our surviving family, and find the dreaded anticipation of not having our **whole** family together for our traditional Thanksgiving adds to our grief. This is not a time to shelter others from our pain. Being hypocritical gives false messages, and confuses others who want to help us. Friends and extended family members sometimes think they always know what is best for us. Their advise may only be best for them, by easing their pain and pretending you are capable of handling more than you can.

It is important to include immediate family members in your

*Continued on page 4*

# Our Children Remembered

## November Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>John Ashner, Jr.</b> - Son of John and Grace Ashner	Jun 22	Nov 8
<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>Chelsie Graham</b> - Daughter of Chris and Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
<b>Chase Groeger</b> - Son of Rich and Amy Herman; Brother of Daisha Hamilton	Nov 23	Jul 16
<b>Jill Harris</b> - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
<b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
<b>Emma McNulty</b> - Daughter of Jessica and Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
<b>Jacob Miller</b> - Son of William R and Caroline P Miller	Nov 15	Nov 16
<b>Suzanne Miller</b> - Daughter of Russell and Margaret Billig	Nov 28	Sep 28
<b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
<b>Timothy Printz</b> - Son of Matt and Claire Printz; Brother of Wendy, Micah, Calvin & David	Nov 6	Nov 6
<b>Jason Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
<b>Dean Schuler</b> - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
<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>Weston Weiant</b> - Son of Madeline Weiant	Nov 24	Nov 24
<b>Gilbert Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	Oct 22
<b>Emma Werner</b> - Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III; Daughter of Samantha Behler	Dec 15	Nov 1
<b>Christopher Williamson</b> - Son of Chris and Kim Williamson; Brother of the late Christina Joy Williamson	Nov 12	Nov 12
<b>Paul Woodling</b> - Son of Gregg and Mary Ann Miller	Jul 21	Nov 5

### *The following are corrections to Our Children Remembered, September*

<b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
<b>Brenda Fehr Hatrak</b> - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr, Sr; Sister of Barbara R. Burgin & David A. Fehr, Jr; Granddaughter of Elwood & Mary Mann and Warren & Rose Fehr	Aug 31	Jan 8
<b>Chelsie Graham</b> - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
<b>Eric Graver</b> - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
<b>Raquel Guerra</b> - Daughter of Jeff & Kathi Kline	Sep 12	Sep 16
<b>David Hoagland, Jr</b> - Son of Gypsy Garrett	Sep 24	Apr 26
<b>Matt Kush</b> - Son of Rick & Ann Kush; Brother of Mike & Jenn	Aug 24	Feb 10
<b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
<b>Jim Minter</b> - Brother of Jeanine Minter	Aug 15	Mar 14
<b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
<b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
<b>Anthony Sisonick</b> - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
<b>Benjamin Steinert</b> - Son of MaryAnne Steinert	Aug 1	Apr 9
<b>Michael Szabo</b> - Son of John & Maria Szabo, Jr	Aug 2	Aug 17
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Sean Virmalo</b> - Son of Udo & Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28
<b>Stephanie Volkert</b> - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
<b>Jonathan Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Aug 20	Jan 22
<b>Christina Williamson</b> - Daughter of Chris & Kim Williamson; Sister of the late Christopher Jayden Williamson		Aug 6



## Love Gifts



Love Gifts 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. Gifts are tax deductible.

*We thank the following this month for their generosity*

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Betty Schuler	<b>Dean Lynn Schuler</b> <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Pat Andrew	<b>Jill Patricia Harris</b> <i>Happy Birthday Jill. We love and miss you. Mom, Jeff, Sam &amp; Alex</i>
♥ Linda & Larry Rothrock	<b>Scott G Rothrock</b> <i>Forever in our hearts</i>

*Continued from page 2*

holiday planning. Don't try to read their minds. You are showing respect and acknowledging their pain by getting their input. They, too, have apprehensions of up coming holidays, and need to have open verbal communication.

If you plan to be with friends or extended family, it may be wise to give advance notice that you may not be able to "keep it together". Ask friends to accept your decision. If you plan to have people in, try to let others help you prepare the dinner. You may want to deviate from traditions. Only you can decide what is best for you. We kept all our traditions, but that may not be best for you. We still had our surviving children at home, and it seemed important to hold to seasonal memories.

Even though it is difficult to count blessings, we need to communicate with our feelings. Family, friends, and relationships are always at the top of our list of things to be thankful for. Next came material things, which now seem so trivial, and not even worth enumerating. "Things" don't belong on the same page anymore. Most of us have learned a new meaning about life. What a waste it would be if we endured all this pain and agony, and did not become a more caring person. We also have a new understanding of the word "Compassion", and have learned to reach out to those who need us.

We should not minimize our pain. It often prevents us from counting our blessings, and that is very normal during our early grief. The intense pain blocks out everything. We should feel no guilt for having normal human reactions. Allow yourself to grieve and cry, it is very healing.

There are no shortcuts to get past our pain. But, it will get softer, and tolerable, and we learn how to handle the holidays. I could not believe this in my fresh grief. I have healed more than I ever thought possible. All memories were so painful. One of the things I am most thankful for, is that I can now remember beautiful times with Doug, without having intense pain. I feel you will also have this blessing one day.

*God Bless, Marie Hofmockel, TCF Valley Forge*

## **NORMAN ROCKWELL NEVER PAINTED ME**



*At this time of year it always seems  
that I see families of others' dreams.  
Everywhere I look, and every ad I see,  
shows the joyful reunions of a family.*

*With the table laden, good times abound;  
While families, reunited, gather round.  
But Rockwell never painted an empty chair and  
a family mourning the one who's not there.*

*A season that once was celebrated  
now makes us feel more isolated.  
I need TCF so that I can see  
that there are others just like me  
whose feelings about holidays are mixed at best  
whose strengths of will are put to the test.  
We're loving those that we still hold near -  
but thoughts of one out of reach bring a tear.*

*Even now, amidst the love and gladness  
this time of year brings a certain sadness.  
I no longer have the "average" family  
So that is why Rockwell never painted me.*

*Kathy Hahn, TCF Lower Bucks County, PA*



## **A Thought as we near Thanksgiving**

*By Claire Sanford, TCF Loganport, IN*

I'm thankful, Lord, for loving care  
I'm thankful, too, for something more  
I'm thankful, Lord, that I can bear  
The things I am not thankful for



## One November Day

By Sherry Brown, TCF Lehigh Valley, PA  
Submitted by Brenda Solderitch in memory of  
her 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.



## For My Compassionate Friends

How is it that I know you?  
How'd you get into my life?  
Sometimes when I look at you,  
It cuts me like a knife.

I do not want to know you,  
I don't want to cross that line.  
Let's both go back into the past,  
When everything was fine.

You've held me and you've hugged me,  
And dried a tear or two,  
Yet, you're practically a stranger,  
Why do you do the things you do?

Of course, I know the reason,  
We are in this Club we're in,  
And why we hold on to each other  
Like we are long-lost kin.

For us to know each other,  
We had to lose a kid,  
I wish I'd never met you,  
But, I'm so thankful that I did.

Marilyn Rollins  
TCF Lake/Porter Counties, IN

## Donations & Contributions

- ★ *Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA*  
*For our meeting space*
- ★ *Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions*  
*In Memory of David Todd Smith*

- ★ *Aetna Payroll Contributors*
- ★ *United Way Payroll Contributors*
- ★ *The Matt Kush Foundation*  
*In Memory of Matt Kush*

# Compassion vs. Comparison

By Alan Pedersen

*Alan Pedersen is nationally recognized as one of the most entertaining, inspiring and informative speakers in the world on finding hope and rebuilding a life after loss. He is an award-winning singer/songwriter, recording artist & TV host.*

*To find healing in his own life after the death of his daughter Ashley in 2001, he began writing and recording songs about the grief journey. Since 2004, Alan has shared his unique message of hope, mixed with humor and beautiful songs with captivated audiences in more than 1,300 cities throughout the U.S. and Canada.*

*In 2013 Alan took a break from touring for nearly 4 years when he became the executive director of The Compassionate Friends.*

*Alan has since returned to touring the country with his Angels Across the USA tour.*

The other day I was brought into a discussion by a father and daughter about whose loss is "greater" surrounding the death of his 21-year-old son and her brother. As I listened to the father defend his position that the death of a child is the absolute worst loss ever, I watched his daughter become frustrated and sensed her feelings of marginalization about her grief. They both wanted my opinion, and so I gave it to them.

I asked them both to imagine a scenario, one in which the father had tripped and fallen and badly scraped both of his knees, and the girl had fallen and badly scraped both of her elbows. I said, "now both of you are in pain, which of your injuries is the worse"? They both looked at me awkwardly. I asked the father, "looking at your daughters scraped-up elbows does it make you want to reach out and help her?" He of course said "yes". I asked the daughter, "looking at your father and his scraped-up knees does it make you want to reach out and help him?" She of

course said "yes".

I went a step further and asked the father, would your scraped-up knees allow you to know exactly how painful your daughters scraped up elbows are? He said "no, but I am sure I could relate to her pain even though it isn't exactly like mine". I then asked him, "if your knees hurt slightly more or slightly less than your daughter's elbows would it make her pain any less, would it make your pain any greater than it already is"?

As simple as this analogy is, both the father and daughter quickly realized that there is no up-side to comparing losses. Unfortunately, I see people comparing losses often and find it to be very unfortunate. What most of us have learned through our grief experience, is that grief hurts the most when it is our pain.

Comparing losses causes us to

minimize our compassion for others whose pain is very real and difficult for them.

Sometimes we marginalize our own loss when we see someone whose loss seems so much greater than ours.

Unfortunately, this does

nothing to help us either. If I had 2 wisdom teeth pulled, and you had 1 wisdom tooth pulled, would your comparison of how lucky you are to have had only one tooth removed lessen the pain in your mouth?

One of the things I enjoy about traveling the country and speaking and doing workshops is that so many of the people who attend are part of grief support groups. As facilitators and those who want to support others going through a similar loss it is extremely important that we don't give into comparison of losses and instead always extend compassion. It is not up to any of us to define another's loss, or to measure the depths of their pain based on our own loss.

**Compassion brings us together, comparison breaks us apart.**

***"it is extremely important that we don't give into comparison of losses and instead always extend compassion"***

# Sibling Page

## Sisters and Brothers

### The grief of adult siblings



Adult siblings' grief may be overlooked. Yes, it is dreadful for our parents when our sibling, their child, dies. Horrific actually, made even more so because we know. We see it in their faces and feel it in their words. We know because we may be parents ourselves and the thought of losing one of our children is unfathomable. It's also awful for our sibling's spouse and their children. We see and feel it in their faces and wonder how they will survive. And, it is dreadful for us too. We've lost our mirror, our confidante, in some cases our anchor and the person we expected to be with us forever.

Our families are changed, scarred. The absence of our sibling, and sometimes their entire family, at holiday events, cuts to the core. And, for many bereaved siblings, we've lost our stories. Our parents, so traumatized by the death of their child, can no longer bear to speak their name. There are no "remember when ..." stories ending with laughter; we learn that just mentioning our sibling's name causes too much pain. As one bereaved sibling said to me, "You quickly get to know what you can and can't say". This place or role as "grief observer" versus "griever" is lonely.

It's easy to make the leap that our own grief must somehow be less than that of other

"closer" family. "You hear it enough; you start to think maybe you really shouldn't be feeling so bad. Maybe something is wrong with me", a bereaved sister said to me. Losing a sibling at any age matters. It is a profound loss and just hearing the words, "this must be so hard for you", can mean so much. For me, writing and finding ways to continue sharing stories about my brother were and are the best gifts anyone could offer me. When I talk about him, he's with me. And I like that.

Brenda Marshall from Brothers and Sisters,  
TCF Victoria, Australia, Sibling

*To live in hearts we leave behind  
Is not to die.*

*~Thomas Campbell*

## This Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving and always.

Through the grief,

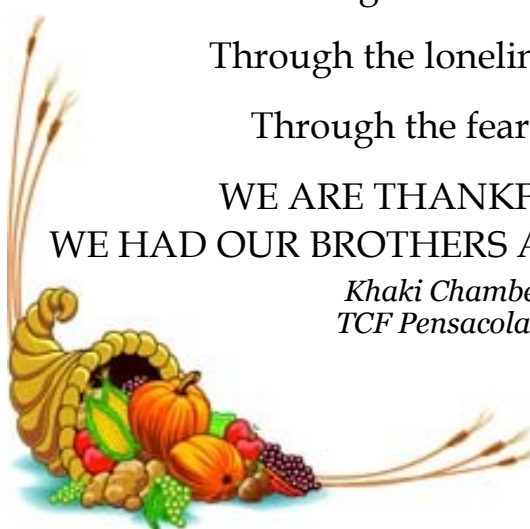
Through the tears

Through the loneliness,

Through the fears,

WE ARE THANKFUL  
WE HAD OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

*Khaki Chambers,  
TCF Pensacola, Fl*



## The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

**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.*

### Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

**TCF Carbon County** - 484-719-6753

**TCF Easton** - 610-515-3526

**TCF Quakertown** - 215-703-8431

**GRASP** (grief recovery after substance passing)

**TCF Pocono** - 570 - 350 - 6695

484-863-4324 or 610-442-8490

### Love Gift Form

*Your love 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.*

Deadlines are the 1st of the month previous to the month you wish publication in. Example the deadline for publication in January is December the 1st

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

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Phone

Email Address

Lehigh Valley Chapter Mailing Address

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I would like to make a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 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 or those that do not indicate an edition 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.

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