



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 36 Issue 12

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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. You will be added to the notification list and you will be notified in advance of 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 for fully vaccinated persons
- Do not attend if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to Covid or the Flu, tested positive in the last 14 days
- Chairs will be preset to maintain social distancing
- No food

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 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 below)

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

Newsletter Editor Contact

• by mail:

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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 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, 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

The Gift Of The Worldwide Candle Lighting



May 11, 1995: 45 years after I had taken my first breath of life would now sadly and incomprehensibly mark my precious daughter's last. Blisteringly hot day six of our family vacation in Orlando on a freeway many hundreds of miles from our home in Minnesota, an alcohol-impaired driver fell asleep at the wheel crashing into the side of the car where Nina was seated thereby ending the promising life of my vibrantly beautiful 15-year-old daughter, killing her instantly. A week that began in joyful family togetherness ended in unspeakable tragedy.

Brokenhearted, we returned home to begin the daunting task of learning to live without Nina. We catatonically walked through the mind-numbing chore of making arrangements for our daughter's funeral, our house filled with people aiding us however they could. But soon after the service, the silence in our home was deafening. My son wondered aloud where everyone had gone. Though hard to conceive that the sun still rose and set every day; that people continued to work, breathe, laugh and love, I undoubtedly knew the answer to his question; they had returned to the

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Our Children Remembered

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

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
Michael Conelias - Son of Trent and Joanne Conelias	Dec 10	Aug 1
David DeLong - Son of Gene DeLong & the late Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong	Oct 23	Dec 7
Heather Hawn - Daughter of Mike and Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh - Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
Audrey King Koch - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
Joseph McDonald - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
Cody Myers - Son of David and Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Lauren Schneck - Daughter of James and Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
Emma Werner - Daughter of Samantha Behler; Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III	Dec 15	Nov 1



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
♥David Bremmer	♥ Hunter Bremmer <i>Happy 42nd Birthday! All my love, Dad</i>
♥Trent and Joanne Conelias	Michael Conelias <i>Happy Heavenly Birthday Michael. Loved and missed so much!</i>

Donations & Contributions

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★ Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA
<i>For our meeting space</i> | ★ Aetna Payroll Contributors |
| ★ Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions
<i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | ★ United Way Payroll Contributors |
| | ★ The Matt Kush Foundation
<i>In Memory of Matt Kush</i> |



THE RED RIBBON

One tradition we started last year was tying a big red ribbon around the tree in front of our house. This was our "Bryan" decoration. It was there to tell the world (or at least a little bit of it that drove down Morningside Drive) that we were thinking of our son. The neighbors, of course, asked us why we had hung this big red ribbon on our front tree. It was kind of an odd decoration, in kind of an odd location. Well, we explained it to one neighbor and they explained it to another. . .and so on. Soon, many of the front trees on Morningside Drive were decorated with big red ribbons. It gave me a very heartwarming feeling to drive home each day and see these ribbons. They told me that the neighborhood was thinking about us and thinking about Bryan.

Cindy Fisher TCF, Cincinnati, OH

Continued from page 2

normalcy of their untainted existence while our lives felt irreparably shattered.

While others had gone back to the "real world", even in the midst of my cavernous grief I knew I had to preserve Nina's memory; I needed to find others who also desired their loved ones not be forgotten, realizing that it had to be another bereaved parent. I also needed reassurance there was hope that the raw pain of my loss would not continue forever, and that I was not alone on this most difficult of journeys. Thankfully, the funeral director in our city led me to The Compassionate Friends (TCF), a self-help group for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. There I found the support and understanding that I so desperately craved, along with many distinctive, creative ways from seasoned grievers to ensure that Nina would be forever remembered.

This became particularly important as I neared the first Christmas without Nina. They showed me I could bring her into the holiday season she loved so much by attending our chapter's annual holiday candle lighting. A few short years later, I became involved in chapter leadership. During that time, the TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL) came into existence and culminated into what is believed to be the world's largest candle lighting. Held the second Sunday of December at 7:00 p.m. in each time zone around the world candles are lit for one hour. As the candles burn down in one time zone, they are lit in the next, creating a virtual 24-hour wave of light around the globe.

The past few years I have been the MC for our chapter's program in conjunction with the WCL. From my vantage point, I clearly see each tear-stained face. Though the room is dimly lit in the beginning, as each flame is lit for a child gone too soon, the room gradually becomes bathed in a warm and peaceful glow. The candles are held proudly aloft in a show of fortitude and solidarity, with the belief that our children look down and see our lights of love and hope lifted heavenward, signifying that though gone is the life, never is their light.

The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting is the gift I give myself (and Nina) each holiday season, and

many family members and friends gift me with their presence at the chapter event or light a candle at 7 p.m. in remembrance of Nina. For all of us whose precious children have died it is a beautiful and special way to ensure forevermore **"...that their light may always shine."**

With gentle thoughts over the holiday season, and always,

Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF/St. Paul, MN

Holiday Lights



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

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

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

So, let us all in The Compassionate Friends extend a candle of light and hope not only to each other, but to the unfortunate people who, for whatever reason, become one of us this winter and will be in need of that light. It's the least we can do and it accomplishes so much.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT.

Bettye and Sam Rosenberg, TCF Louisville, KY

A Letter To My Family And Friends

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday. It will be our first Christmas or Chanukah without our child and I have all I can do coping with the "spirit of the holiday" on the radio, TV, in the newspapers and stores. We do not feel joyous and trying to pretend this holiday is going to be like the last will be impossible because we are missing one. Our family traditions will be too painful for us to continue this year. Please understand this and maybe some time in the future we will have these traditions again.

Please allow me to talk about my child, if I feel a need. Don't be uncomfortable with my tears. My heart is breaking and the tears are a way of letting out my sadness.

I plan to do something special in memory of my child. Please recognize my need to do this in order to keep our memories alive. My fear is not that I'll forget, but that you will. Please don't criticize me if I do something that you don't think is normal. I'm a different person now and it may take a long time before this different person reaches an acceptance of my child's death. As I survive the stages of grief, I will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season.

Love, A bereaved parent

Lovingly lifted & adapted from the Winnipeg TCF newsletter

Amid The Bustle

Amid the bustle
And the holiday cheer
With Thanksgiving gone
And Christmas soon here
While cookies are baking
And the vacuum is humming
As I get ready
For the company that's coming.

Amid the paper so shiny
And the tinsel and glitz.
While I lovingly wrap presents
For my loved one and friends.
While I frantically shop
For that one special gift
That will bring Mom a smile,
And almost certainly a kiss.

When Santa's list is finished,
And the kids are in bed,
While Dad trims the tree,
And I make the bread.
The toys are assembled,
And the stockings are stuffed,
The turkey is in the oven,
And we've finally done enough.

When the preparation is over,
For the day that lies ahead,
I think of what has been lost,
And the blessings that remain.
I miss those who have gone,
And can never be again.
though thankful for
family still here,
It is for you
I shed a holiday tear.

*Lisa Sculley
Jacksonville, FL*



The Necessary Magic of Christmas

Halloween is long gone. Thanksgiving swept up in a flurry of turkey wings, and Christmas is just around the corner. It's that time of year when bereaved parents begin a collective shudder at the thought of enduring another holiday season.

Many will be thinking: Christmas, who needs it? Who needs the hassles of shopping for just the right gift which will be returned anyway. Who needs fighting the crowds, and baking endless batches of cookies with all the unwanted calories.

Who really needs the Christmas carols that only bring more pain instead of joy? It's enough to make you want to run away and hide until January, and to let the rest of the world frolic with Frosty.

And yet ... there is something to be said about the first snow fall on Christmas Eve, or hearing your grandmother's favorite Christmas song being played at the mall.

There is something about Christmas that can comfort a soul in pain, and it could be little things, such as a surprise phone call from your friend of twenty-five years, calling all the way from Australia just to say hello.

Or perhaps it is a loaf of banana bread from a shivering neighbor over the back fence saying "I care, and I'm thinking of you."

When all is said and done, maybe we bereaved parents really do need the necessary magic of Christmas. We need to let some of the wonder creep into our lives and soothe our battered hearts and look at the holiday for what it truly is - a time of love, remembering, and yes, even the weeping. It is a time to think about possibly starting new traditions. Instead of writing Christmas cards, create a family newsletter. Decorate a special ornament and paint your child's name on it. Attend a concert, and take a friend. Rent a cabin in the woods and take the time to enjoy nature and let your thoughts and tears flow freely.

Christmas can be a time to honor our child by embracing what we have, and by celebrating their lives instead of living their deaths. Most of all, we can remember that nearly 2,000 years ago, two parents in Bethlehem were celebrating the birth of their own precious Son, only to become bereaved parents themselves 33 years later.

From our house to yours, may you find peace and blessings this holy, holiday season.

Sandra S. VanOrman TCF, Tacoma WA

The Griever's Holiday Bill of Rights

You have a right to say TIME OUT! anytime you need to. Time out to let up, blow off a little steam, step away from the holidays, have a "huddle", and start over.

You have a right to TELL IT LIKE IT IS. When people ask, "How are you?" you have the right to tell them how you really feel, not just what they want to hear. (P.S. You also have the right to smile and say you're fine, because telling them how you really feel isn't worth your time---some people will never understand anyway.)

You have the right to some "BAH HUM BUG" DAYS. You are not a bad person just because you don't feel like singing Christmas carols all day.

You have the right to DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY. There is no law that says you must always do Christmas the same way. You can do 10 cards instead of 100--or no cards at all! You can open your presents at somebody else's house. You can do without a tree. You can have pizza instead of turkey--the list is endless.

You have the right to be WHERE YOU WANT TO BE. Be at home or at the relatives. Be in any city, any state you chose! NOBODY SAID YOU HAVE TO HAVE SNOW TO HAVE CHRISTMAS. There's no law that says you must stay at home.

You have a right to SOME FUN. When you have a day that isn't so bad and you feel like doing something just for fun, then do it! Don't be afraid of what someone else will say if they see you laughing and having a good time. Laughter is every bit as important as tears!

Bruce Conley

Sibling Page

A Holiday To Do List:

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bittersweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst.

At any rate, I can handle November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sibling for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.
5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.
6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go - the



beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!

7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.
8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH - it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.
9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.
10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

Amy Baker Ferry, TCF Heart of Florida Chapter
In loving memory of my brother, David

Gifts I Would Leave For You

The gifts I would leave beneath your tree
Aren't those you could touch or see
Not wrapped in Christmas tissue gay
But a gift of life to live each day.
The gift of love, warm and true
And health your whole life through
Smiles, and happiness, and cheer
To keep us happy through the year.
These are the gifts I'd leave for you
Though I know your life is through
Even if my heart has no song
I feel you here to guide me on.

Jeffrey E. Meredith, TCF- Atlanta, GA
Twin brother of Scott Meredith

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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, 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) 788-9440

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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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