



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume 36 Issue 6

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June

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Chapter 1562

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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 shall be worn covering the nose and mouth at all times during meetings. Bandanas, Scarves etc are not acceptable
- Do not attend if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to Covid or have tested positive in the last 14 days
- 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 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

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Life Can Be Good Again

by Don Hackett TCF Hingham, MA *"from Saying Olin, To Say Goodbye"*

For nearly sixteen years, his voice has been silent. It is a span now nearly equal to the time it was heard. Never did I anticipate life without the sounds that marked his presence. Learning to survive that silence once seemed an impossible task, one so overwhelming I could find no hope or expectation of ever finding life once more.

He was our son, our only child. The tempo of his growing measured the cadence, the beat, for our own living. His passing left an existence without any value that I could immediately perceive. Ultimately, I came to recognize that I was wrong.

Life still had meaning, but it had fallen to me to find it, just as it had been in the years before his coming. Indeed, even as it had been throughout the time of his living, life still demanded my active participation, my own commitment to give it purpose and resolve.

Hindsight affords an ease in stating this realization that did not exist while struggling in the depths of bereavement. The steps taken to finally seize life again seem logical and ordered while intellectualizing the process but I know that this is much easier to write than it was to experience.

I confess, with both sorrow and gladness, that I can no longer summon the full measure of those savage feelings and the unremitting pain that engulfed me in those early years. Working through them was the most de-manding challenge of my life, enacting tolls in physical health perhaps even greater than the long term effects on mind and emotion.

Today, however, I can reflect with gratitude upon a decade of mastery over the sadness. Control of my thoughts returned to me, and I know freedom from the utter devastation of those early years. Looking back reveals essential turning points on the road to healing. Some would seem to generalize easily for anyone. Others seem to respond to personal strengths and weaknesses more particular to an individual. These points included:

- Self forgiveness for the many deficiencies found within on the endless soul journey that is our lot in the wake of our child's death.
- Forgiveness of others, relatives, friends and associates, who are less affected than are we, who seem unable to help us in our time of deep trouble and need.
- The accepting, at last, of the finality of our loss, and that we must gradually unleash ourselves from our former lives and structure anew.

Learn to communicate value to spouses, friends, surviving siblings, our love for whom seems shrouded behind the totality of our grief.

(continued on page 4)

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



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.

Please use form in this newsletter to donate. Gifts are tax deductible.

We thank the following this month for their generosity

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Lucille V. Radocha	Peter A. Radocha <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Pat Andrew	Jill Patricia Harris <i>We love and miss you and Papa, Mom, Jeff, Sam & Alex</i>

Our Children Remembered

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
John Ashner, Jr. - Son of John and Grace Ashner	Jun 22	Nov 8
Denise Deiter - Sister of Cheryl A. McCue & the late Cathy A. Mertz	Jul 3	Jun 11
John Fry - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
Elizabeth Gibson, MD - Daughter of Richard J. Brown & The Late Marilyn Brown; Sister of Margaret Nahrganl & Eric Brown	Jun 15	Apr 2
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl and Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
Robert Grozier, II - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Feb 15	Jun 11
Jill Harris - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
Audrey King Koch - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
Faith Kleppinger - Daughter of John and Barbara Kleppinger; Sister of Susan Schilling & Jill Kleppinger	Jun 8	Jun 15
Michael Milot - Son of John and Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
Kevin Stewart - Son of Joanne Stewart; Brother of Keith Stewart & The Late Constance Stewart	Oct 6	Jun 15
Craig Yurick - Son of Robert and Sharon Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21

*No time on earth is long enough to share with those we love
or to prepare our hearts for that last good-bye."*

Alarie Tennille

(continued from page 2)

Find ways to give expression to our need to somehow memorialize our child, be it through writing a book, planting trees, sustaining scholarships, or any number of ways. Our need to preserve and safeguard our child's memory is real and deserving of our attention. A time comes for many to find new homes, jobs and purpose. These are often part and parcel of any significant change in our lives. Surrender to time, giving ourselves space within it to do our work. Use time to foster healing within, to enable us tomorrow with hope.

No recovery will return us to life as we knew it while our child lived. That life is forever gone and, to a certain extent, we may well have to accept that, as we perceive life today. The finest days of our lives may well be a part of our past. Somehow, we must recognize that this is not unique to surviving our child's death, but is often a portion of the human condition.

Olin is dead. As much as I would wish it otherwise, it will never be. He is not forgotten. His voice, his laughter, his joy, and his shortcomings live on in me. No day passes without thinking about him. I am grateful for his touch upon my life. Yet, joy is again mine. Pleasure is no longer a forbidden or guilt-producing element in daily living. I live, gladly and with purpose, with Olin both behind me in time, but with me internally.

Is this not our goal, to heal, to find the strength to love both yesterday and today? Our children have been the richest part of our lives and today should reflect the grace of that love in all that we are today.

Olin is with me still, but now of the heart and memory. No matter what my span of days, each moment will yield its love for him. He will stand waiting on the other shore. When the day is over and life gives up the mortal for the eternal, there will I find him, with laughter in the air, joy in the moment and with love in the heart.

Dear Mr. Hallmark,

It's me again from Heaven where clearly everything is seen, and so it just occurred to me, it's nearly June sixteen.

I know we just discussed a card for Mom this year, and how no cards there were for a child like me to share.

And now I found no card again or me to reach down from above to thank my Dad who gave me life and really needs my love.

He's still the father I call Dad, no matter where my soul resides. He tries so hard to comfort Mom and so his tears he hides.

I need some way to tell him he can be sad and cry with Mother. It's good for him to cry at times we all cry for each other.

Yes, I see Dad as he talks to me to my picture in his wallet. You see I really need a way to let him know I got it! Some say that Mom and Dad they grieve in different ways, And so it looks from the outside, but I see through that worldly haze.

My Dad he cries while in the car, the shower washes all those tears; He thinks, "A better Dad I could've been than I was throughout those years."

And so you see, Dear Hallmark man, I need your help to let him know just what a wonderful Dad he's been. He's given all he can bestow.

My dad, my friend, the one with whom I could walk and talk and play. He needs to be remembered, too like other fathers on Father's Day.

Please help me find that special way to tell him all to me he's been. That by his side each day I'll stay until, one day, we meet again.

The love of a parent is not contingent on how much time we had with our child.

Love simply cannot be measured in time.

Joanne Cacciatore

THE CLASS MOTTO

Wayne Loder, TCF Lakes Area, MI

June 1994

My wife pointed to the class motto in the program as we waited patiently for the high school graduation ceremony to begin. I fingered the paper, attempting to grasp the true meaning of the words."

*"When all else is lost,
the future still remains."*

I thought for a moment and then said to her, "Whoever chose that saving sure wasn't a bereaved parent." My mind wandered for a moment as I recalled three years before when my only children, eight year old Stephanie and five year old Stephen had died in an auto accident. Not only had I lost everything of true meaning in this life, but the truth seemed so bleak there was no reason for me to go on living.

Fate had ended our "complete" family, and the remains of that family were as unstable as the mighty oak tree that had lost the battle with a tornado, just waiting for the slightest of winds to topple it over, finishing the job.

That first year is virtually gone from my memory. My mind operated as if in a cloud. It seemed to me that I did the things that needed doing, but I can't really remember what those things were. I know I thought a lot about the future. Medical conditions, plus our age, were against us having more children.

Adoption seemed like a long hard road, and I didn't know if we had the strength to follow all the curves in that road. I thought about how our wish came true a year and a half after the accident when Pat

gave birth to Chris, our third child, and a year later Katie - our fourth.

With the help of friends, family and our faith, we had found the strength to carry on despite the mental assault to our well being caused by Stef and Steve's deaths. Jolted back to reality by the beginning of "Pomp and Circumstance," I thought about the class motto one last time.

*"When all else is lost,
The future still remains."*

Maybe the person who wrote that motto did know what he was doing. When life knocks the stuffing out of us with a wicked right jab, perhaps it is true the future still remains, just waiting for us to set the right course.

I once read of a story in the Jewish Talmud of a man who had a little girl, his only daughter, who became sick and died. His heart was broken. Despite the efforts of his friends to comfort him and help him realize that life does go on, he refused to be comforted.

One night he dreamed that he was in heaven watching little girls in a pageant. Each girl carried a lighted candle. But the candle carried by his own daughter was unlit. As he took her in his arms and caressed her, he asked, "Why is your candle not lit?" She answered, "Sometimes it does light, but your tears always put it out."

Just as this man learned that he should not allow his tears to darken the light of his daughter's candle, we too must look beyond our tears toward the future. For if we live in the great emptiness of our past, we will be doomed to remain there forever.

Missing Graduate

Emma Valenteen,
TCF Phoenixville, PA

Parents happy faces all around me,
With a glow from within,
Pomp and Circumstance is playing,
Now the program will begin.

The graduates are lined up,
They are coming down the aisle,
Some have serious faces, yet
Some have a little smile.

I look down the aisle,
Hoping for your face to come into sight,
This is your class,
It was to be your graduation night.

All the graduates pass by,
But none of them are you.
A tug of my heart tells me,
You are not here, your death is true.

God called you home...
I wanted you here in such a bad way.
Looking into your classmates' faces
Do they recall you, missing this day?

Memories, sweet memories,
Now fill my mind and heart.
There will be no golden tassel
This day for my Sweetheart.

The Class is oh! so happy,
This isn't the time to be blue.
Now I must go shake a hand
And get a hug or two.

***When one day at a time
seems too long,
try just one minute
at a time.***

Kristin Thompson TCF Nashville, TN

A Father Mourns Too

Doug Hughes. TCF Las Vegas NV

I just watched another TV commercial for cologne, which is the first sign of the approach of Father's Day. Like other fathers, I know the gift I'd like to get this Father's Day, just as I know there is no way that it will happen—my son's life, an opportunity not to hurt when I see boys who are his age, a chance to dream those dreams for that little boy again. But that's not going to happen. Instead I will get up on that day, having called my own father the night before to wish him a happy Father's Day, and I will go to the cemetery to place flowers on my son's grave. I will stand alone and cry for a time and then return home to my wife and new infant son.

This year we will have a greater measure of peace because of the birth of our son, but I shall always have a hole in my soul, a longing that I know I will have until I die. Like many bereaved fathers, I have felt misunderstood about how a father should mourn and for how long. I do not understand how a society can have such a belief in the strength of maternal love and do such a good job ignoring the intensity of paternal love. From the people whose only question at my son's memorial service was how was my wife dealing with this tragedy, to the longtime friend who didn't understand my choking up after watching a Hallmark commercial, it seems that many around us have difficulty understanding a father's grief.

So, support and love is needed and needed badly. Of course, we have Compassionate Friends, but something more personal and closer to home is needed. I hope that bereaved fathers will not be forgotten on Father's Day. It is often said that we don't often talk of our emotional needs and are reluctant to show our pain, but we too need love when we hurt. Please remember us on Father's Day and remember that the cute little commercials that hurt mothers in May take their toll on fathers in June.

Sibling Page

Excerpts from "Adult Siblings Grief"

Most people misunderstand how deeply adult siblings grieve. If your sibling was older than you, you have shared life with him or her as long as you have had your parents. Even if your sibling was younger, you may not remember life without him or her.

When you sibling died, you not only lost a unique loved one, but you lost that person's role within the family. It is normal that you and other siblings will try to 'fill in' some of these roles. Some changes may take place quite naturally and easily while others may feel awkward and cause a great deal of conflict with the family.

For some bereaved siblings, the fact that their sibling's death has altered their relationship with their parents is deeply painful. Under the stress of coping with the death of their child, your parents may react to you as though you were still a small child. They may try to comfort you at their own expense, or try to protect you from the reality of death. If this happens, you may need to talk to your parents and offer them some concrete ways they can be supportive of you.

You may find yourself trying to protect your parents from the grief you feel. You may go to great lengths to hide your pain from them. You may take on parental responsibilities in an effort to care for them ending up 'parenting your parents'. And if your parents feel you are overprotecting or smothering them, respect their response.

Ultimately, you will forage a new relationship with your parents. Talk with them about what you observe and ask them to share with you how they see you

differently. Tell them you want to use these new understandings to build a new, more mature relationship with them.

Lovingly lifted from "Broken Hearts, Living Hope"

When a parent dies, it is
said you lose your past;

When your spouse dies,
you lose your present;

And when your child dies
you lose your future;

However when your
sibling dies, you lose part
of your past, your
present and your future

The Compassionate Friends,
Adults Grieving The Loss
of a Sibling

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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

484-863-4324 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

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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