



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 36 Issue 7

Copyright © 2022 The Compassionate Friends, Inc

July

TCF, Lehigh Valley
Chapter 1562

Phone
484-891-0823

Email:
tcflehighvalley@gmail.com

Website
www.lehighvalleytcf.org

Facebook Page
facebook.comTCFlehighvalley

Pinterest
The Compassionate Friends,
Lehigh Valley Chapter

Steering Committee
Brian & Kathleen Collins,
Dean & Donna Davidson,
Gene Delong, George Geiger,
Brenda Solderitch

Newsletter Editor/
Database & Website
Manager
Kathleen Collins
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com
484-891-0823

Treasurer/Newsletter
Mailing Coordinator
Brenda Solderitch

TCF Regional Coordinator
Ann Walsh
tcfcastrc@yahoo.com

TCF National
Headquarters
877- 969-0010 (toll-free)
www.compassionatefriends.
org

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 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

Newsletter Editor Contact

- by mail:
The Compassionate Friends, LV
C/O Kathleen Collins,
2971 Pheasant Dr.,
Northampton, PA 18067
- by phone:
484-891-0823;
- by email:
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

Inside this issue:

Article - Liberation	2
Love Gifts & Our Children Remembered	3
Poem - His Shoes Speak to Me	4
Article - Butterflies Make Me Happy	5
Article- Reservations - Vacations	6
Article - Be Good To Yourself This Summer	6
Sibling Page Article - Dear Ann Landers Poem - The Beach	7
Love Gift Form	8

Liberation

By Andrea Gambill, Editor of Bereavement Magazine

It is one thing to be free; it is quite another to be liberated. Liberation implies that freedom was absent and there was bondage. Though it may not always seem obvious, grief has both the power to bind and the power to liberate from bondage.

Initially, when a person we love dies, it seems we are in the bondage of grief and will never recover. It feels as if we will never be the same again and we are right, we never will be the same again. But maybe being the same again shouldn't be our goal. Confronted by death, we suddenly see LIFE in a totally different way than we ever considered it before. Gradually, we begin to realize HOW we are different, and it is in those differences that we can find liberation and new freedoms.

Many of the things we used to think were important are now irrelevant. Previous goals and opportunities are now limp, meaningless, empty and discarded. But as we lose interest in many of the things that formerly seemed so life-enhancing, we discover new values and priorities.

At last we are liberated from the bondage of competition. If we were formerly obsessed with the fastest, the most expensive, the biggest, the newest, the most beautiful, the most powerful, we now know how empty and futile those victories can be. In our "other lives", we believed we had to belong to the right organizations, attend the right schools, live in the right neighborhoods, work in the right jobs, wear the right clothes, have the right opinions. Now, some of the things that were "right" are wrong, and some just simply don't matter anymore. Our grief has liberated us from those masters.

We have a new freedom to challenge, to attempt new ventures, to confront old relationships, to develop and explore latent skills and talents. No longer are we burdened and shackled by "should" and "ought".

We have the freedom to be wrong. Though we are no longer "right" as often as we used to be, when we are right, we're more certain and less abusive about it.

We have been liberated from inhibition and self-consciousness. The strength born of our pain has given us the courage to speak out when before we might have been silent. We no longer fear the criticism and judgment of others. Who can hurt

(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
♥David Bremmer	Hunter Bremmer <i>I can't believe that it's been 10 yrs since God called you. I think of you every day! All my love, Dad</i>

Our Children Remembered

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
Courtney Daud - Daughter of Marie Daud	Jul 15	Jul 15
Sarah Davidson - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Jul 10	Jul 10
Denise Deiter - Sister of Cheryl A. McCue & the late Cathy A. Mertz	Jul 3	Jun 11
Mark Dilts, Jr - Son of Mark and Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts	Jan 6	Jul 8
Sgt. Christopher Geiger - Son of George & Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Michael, Terrance, David & Timothy Geiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Eric Graver - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
Chase Groeger - Son of Rich & Amy Herman; Brother of Daisha Hamilton	Nov 23	Jul 16
James "Jimmy" Hotz - Son of Elizabeth Hotz	Apr 24	Jul 4
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark & Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget & Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
David Kunsman - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
John Leonard, Jr - Son of Jack & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen	Jul 27	Jan 6
Ed McNally - Son of Don & Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29	Feb 11
Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
Robert Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Jul 9	Apr 4
Paul Woodling - Son of Gregg & Mary Ann Miller	Jul 21	Nov 5

There is a place that we call memory... A province by itself which, though unseen, Is home and haven to the heart... And there, in peace and beauty, waiting, Are those with whom we shared our yesterdays.

Nancy Cassell TCF, Monmouth County, NJ

us now? We have experienced the worst and survived. Sorrow has stripped away those fears. Now, we are more aware of the panorama of Life and less concerned with our own little piece of it.

We have discovered the freedom to express our affection for others freely, even lavishly. We are acutely aware that there may be no more chances to say "Goodbye," or, "I love you," one more time.

We are free to develop a new acquaintance with our inner selves. Often we have a keener awareness of the "still, small voice" within. We hear our directions with more sensitivity and trust. We are more aligned with our spiritual connections and perhaps less impressed with "religion." We have learned to appreciate wisdom above knowledge.

We have the freedom to appreciate time in a new value system. Our experience has taught us to view time with a new fragility, because we know how easily and quickly it can seem to end.

We have the freedom to have an open mind. Previously, we may have made concrete and inviolate decisions about anything ranging from breakfast cereal to eternal destiny. Now, we are more cautious, ready to hear another point of view. Whereas we used to have all the answers, now we just have all the questions.

Finally, we have achieved a freedom from the fear of death. We can now look Death squarely in the eye and know that there is no more intimidation. No longer are we afraid. Death had one trump card, and now that it's been played, we stand in the victor's circle.

With liberation, we are free to live and work and advocate in memory of our absent loved ones for whatever time we remain here on Earth. And when it's our turn to be called away, we will leave behind an ongoing legacy of freedom for those we love who yet remain.

Yes, in liberation, there is peace.

His Shoes Speak To Me

By Ora S. Lewis, TCF Orange County

His shoes still sit on the closet floor,
Tho' he's been gone a decade and more.

Some days my memories are a bit hazy.
Is it a nightmare or am I going crazy?

I go the closet and there are his shoes
It's easy to see they really were used.

The prints of his feet are still inside.
He really did live, but too soon he died.

Reality returns, with his shoes on the floor
How long will they be there?
'Til I need them no more.

His bronzed baby shoes sit on a shelf.
They help me to meet a need in myself.

These baby shoes speak of a life just beginning,
The work shoes tell about life and its ending.

With the passing of years, some peace
I've attained.
But the happiness I once knew
cannot be regained.

Yet there's much about life I still want to live. To
my family and others, I still yearn to give.

I've cried many tears, felt the guilt and the pain.
My grief has diminished
and I can laugh once again

***The struggle you're in
today is developing the
strength you need for
tomorrow, don't give up.***

Butterflies Make Me Happy

by Lynn Vines TCF South Bay/L.A., CA



Sometimes in our grief we truly believe we are going crazy. We hurt so bad we don't think we can manage to go on living without our precious child here with us. Part of the grieving process is learning how to do just that. Some parents need the reassurance that their child is okay.

I think the human mind can only take so much pain and jumps at the chance to see signs from their children, reassuring them that they are okay. The way I look at it, if you get comfort from a dream or a sign...enjoy it. You've suffered enough, and believing in signs, butterflies, dreams or what ever else gives you comfort and hurts no one else, is your right as a bereaved person.

Are these signs real, or just in my imagination? Can I prove they are messages from my son? Does it even need to be proven? No, I can't scientifically prove it. But I know that dreams, butterflies, signs and enjoyment in nature makes me feel closer to Eric and therefore I will continue to enjoy them. It hurts no one, I'm not obsessive about it and anyone who chooses to think I'm nuts for believing in such things, can think I'm nuts.

We've all heard how the butterfly is a symbol of rebirth. Whether it's our child moving from this world onto a higher plane, or a bereaved parent emerging from the cocoon of grief into a world without our child here. With us, butterflies are a comfort for many. When I'm missing my son and see a butterfly flitting from flower to flower, I smile and feel better. When I'm in a happy mood and see a butterfly, I enjoy the beauty of such a delicate creature. Taking the time to slow down and watch such a fragile creature going about its business is calming and I don't think anyone should discount the benefits from having a calming moment.

About four months after Eric died, I had a dream about him. I woke myself up from tears of joy running down my face, I knew he was okay...what a relief that was. I still hurt terribly and missed him more than I thought I could endure, but I felt comforted by the dream. Some could say it was my subconscious trying to sort things out, but I choose to believe it was his way of trying to comfort me. Either way, it made me feel better.

Maybe it's because bereaved parents walk around in such a fog and function on automatic pilot that we are moving slow enough to notice the signs that are around us. Maybe dreams are one way for us to accept messages we need to hear and take into our hearts without logically trying to interpret them. Maybe faith is what we rely on when nothing else makes sense and we instinctively know we need something to hold on to. Whatever it is, just give me a second helping; I like feeling closer to my son!

A Symbol of Hope



A Symbol of Hope

A butterfly lights beside me
like a sunbeam

And for a brief moment its glory
and beauty belong to our world

But then it flies again
And though I wish it could have stayed...
I feel lucky to have seen it.

Unknown

Reservations - Vacations

By Janet McPhee, TCF Bergen-Passaic, NJ

Most people plan their summer retreats with families with great anticipation and excitement. They plan well in advance and eagerly fill their trip list with the needed items. They **MAKE** reservations. As bereaved parents, our vacations are forever altered by our grief. Instead of **MAKING** reservations, we **HAVE** reservations about planning a fun-filled week for our families. Here are some of the differences we may experience:

1. **THEY** shake their heads and dread piling into a crowded car for the drive to their destinations.
WE pack the car and wish that one more seat was taken up in the car.
2. **THEY** call months in advance for the perfect vacation.
WE are afraid to make advance plans because we know that something could happen to change our lives, and vacation plans, forever.
3. **THEY** check their children into sleep-away camps for most of the summer. **WE** reluctantly give our remaining children the choice of attending camp or other activities, but would prefer to stay home and spend time with the kids.
WE know how precious each day truly is.
4. **THEY** sign camp consent forms releasing the camp from liability in the case of injury or loss.
WE request an added statement regarding negligence and still wonder whether we should have signed it.
5. **THEY** assume there will always be another summer vacation.
WE pray that there are no more losses.
6. **THEY** look at memory books and smile.
WE look at vacation photos and cry because of those missing.
7. **THEY** hope there will be babysitters at the resort.
WE are happy to be on vacation with our remaining child/children.
8. **THEY** consider vacation memories at the

end of each summer.

WE cherish the past vacations and our new memories with our remaining children.

9. **THEY MAKE** reservations for vacations.
WE HAVE reservations about vacations.
We would love to be **THEM**!

Be Good to Yourself This Summer

TCF Fresno, CA newsletter, June 2001

Summertime is a time to get away and renew yourself. When you are grieving, it is even more important to relax and take time to be good to yourself. Grief work takes physical, emotional and spiritual energy.

Here are some mini vacations: Get outside as often as possible. The warmth of the sun and soft breezes help you to feel alive. Exercise helps work off frustration, anger and depression. Search our local parks, nature trails, even a walk around your own block.

Try to visit places where there is water. Watching water and hearing it lap against the shore is soothing. As the waves recede try to envision your grief receding, as the waves return, imagine them bringing peace and comfort.

Escape into another world through a book or go to the movies... Give your mind a break from the grief.

Don't push you grief down. Get it out into the open so you can deal with it and control it, or it will control you.

Attend a support group meeting., to give you hope and knowledge that you are not alone.

*"It does not matter
how slowly you go
so long as you do not stop."
~ Confucius*

Sibling Page

The following is a response sent to Ann Landers by Dawn Morville Johnson, sibling representative on the TCF National Board of Directors and lovingly lifted from TCF Southern OR Newsletter

Dear Ann Landers: As a bereaved sibling, I was disappointed in your response to "Anonymous in Raleigh, N.C.," who asked whether it would be appropriate to send her parents a card on the anniversary of her brother's death. You advised her not to send a card, but to take her parents to dinner "with no mention of the sad anniversary."

Bereaved parents will tell you that the one thing they want to do is talk about their child. Ignoring the anniversary of a child's death is the same as ignoring the child's birthday: it makes bereaved parents feel as though their child did not exist. Many bereaved parents have told me that their surviving children will not talk about their brother or sister who has died. Often this is because they are afraid of upsetting their parents. However, bereaved parents yearn to hear their children mention the dead child's name. "Anonymous" should be encouraged in her efforts to remember the anniversary of her brother's death by sending a card to her parents.

On the anniversary of my brother's death, I send a special card to my parents to tell them that I am thinking about them and remembering my brother. We open our hearts to each other and share our memories of him and how much we miss him. We also put flowers on his grave that day and have flowers on the church altar in his memory on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of his death. In other words, the day is not like any other day, so I don't treat it as such. My life and my parents' lives changed forever the day he died. Making no mention of it would only be another tragedy.

The Beach



I walked along the beach today
With thoughts of how we used to play,
That long road trip in Dad's green Ford
Mom kept trying to keep us from feeling bored.

But the end result was always the best
When at Grandpa's house we came to rest.
Remember how we used to say...
"Can we please go to the beach today?"

Our best times together
we found down there.
Just two little kids without a care.
Flying colorful kites so high,
and building sand castles in the sky.

And those secret messages
we would send,
Hey Chris, who thought
those days would ever end?

I walked along the beach today,
with thoughts of how we used to play,
I wrote you a message in the sand,
with hopes you could read it
from a far away land.

"I miss you brother, did you have to go?"
It did say,
but the ocean's waves slowly washed it away.
"He's gone now" - said a voice from above.
But Chris - You will live forever through
my memories and love.

Dedicated to my little brother
Christopher Joseph Prescott

Darlene Prescott, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

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

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

Address

Phone

Email Address

Lehigh Valley Chapter Mailing Address

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

Easton Chapter Mailing Address

JOHN SZABO
1514 SCULAC DR
BETHLEHEM, PA 18020

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