



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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

Volume 37 Issue I

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**January**

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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 support group meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

**The Lehigh Valley chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA the second Monday of the month at 7pm**

For information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting text reminder list call or text 484-891-0823

Note: For the safety of all attendees

- Face masks are required for unvaccinated, optional for fully vaccinated.
- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

**Next Meeting January 9**

*Note: If we need to cancel the meeting we will notify everyone on the text list and post the cancelation on our facebook page - [facebook.com/TCFLehighValley](https://facebook.com/TCFLehighValley)*

#### **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 below)

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

### Newsletter Editor Contact

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## The New Year: A Time of Hope

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX

## Our Children Remembered

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

### January Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Brian Burke</b> - Son of Rich & Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
<b>Mark Dilts, Jr</b> - Son of Mark & Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts	Jan 6	Jul 8
<b>Marguerite "Maggie" Faber</b> - Daughter of Harry & Carol Faber	Jan 17	Jan 17
<b>Brenda Fehr Hatrak</b> - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr; Sr. Sister of Barbara R. Burgin & David A. Fehr, Jr.; Granddaughter of Warren & Rose Fehr and Elwood & Mary Mann	Aug 31	Jan 8
<b>Jessica Finlayson</b> - Daughter of Eric & Jean Dalstad; Sister of Rebecca Dalstad	Mar 19	Jan 22
<b>David Grozier</b> - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Jan 13	Jan 14
<b>John Leonard, Jr</b> - Son of Jack & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen	Jul 27	Jan 6
<b>Andrea Luecke</b> - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
<b>James Ralls</b> - son of Tina Ralls; brother of Timothy & Geoffrey	Jan 2	Aug 17
<b>Shane Uttard</b> - Son of Brenda Deubler	Jan 15	May 13
<b>Victoria Volkert</b> - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zacary Volkert	Jan 14	Feb 16
<b>Jonathan Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Aug 20	Jan 22
<b>Liam Whetstone</b> - Son of Cody Whetstone & Linda Haller	Jan 19	Jan 19



## 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.

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Shirley Grozier	<b>David Grozier</b> <i>I love you my son, God bless you. Love Mom</i>
♥ Carol Faber	<b>Maggie Jo Faber</b> <i>Happy Birthday Maggie Love Mom, Randy, Eric, Heidi &amp; Harry</i>

## Donations & Contributions

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

*Sorrow is not forever - Love Is.*

TCF Ventura County, CA.

## Accepting the Unacceptable

"I will never be able to accept the death of my child." Does that sound familiar? Have you said that? Not surprising. That is one, if not the most, difficult thing we have to do to get to the other side of the long dark tunnel of grief.

What does "accept" mean? One parent told me he would never accept his daughter's death, because he said "accept" means to "agree, approve, to consent to," Obviously, in that context no one in their right mind would "accept" their child's death. But there are other meanings to "accept": "believe to be true," "acknowledge." We do not like the sound of those words either, but at some point, accept them, in order to get on with our lives.

By stating we will not accept it, what is accomplished? ... Will it make it not true? If only it were that simple. Then I would be 100% in favor of denial. But it doesn't work that way. There are some things that cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may want them to be.

One example: My husband had a heart attack a little more than a year after Eric's death. He vehemently denied he had had a heart attack. ... He continued on with his HEAVY smoking. Then came his stroke. He is now badly paralyzed on his left side. He cannot deny his stroke. And he cannot go back, and accept his heart attack, change his way of living and perhaps avert the stroke. So what did his denial accomplish? It made things worse.

So it is with us. Denial won't work. At some point in time, we know it has happened. I realized for myself, it was when I could say "Eric died." I could say the word "dead." It took quite a long time. I could say "I lost a son" but not "he died." One day it just came out. It actually shocked and upset me. But afterwards, looking back, I realized that was a big step for me. Not a happy one, but it was one of my turning points.

All of the "stages" of grief that we go through are hard. There is nothing easy about it. As Darcie Sims said..."grief hurts." That almost seems like too mild a statement. The feeling is impossible to put in words. It's devastating!!

"Grief work" takes time and effort. I wish there was an easier way for all of you. I can only give you the hope and encouragement that you, too, can make it. Be kind to and patient with yourself.

God Bless! Mary Ehmann TCF Valley Forge, PA

## Precious Child Remembered

We know that you are hurting  
We know just how you feel.  
The pain deep inside your heart  
You feel it can't be real.

We know what's going through your mind,  
Thoughts that cloud it through the day.  
We're on the road you're traveling now.  
It can be handled, there's a way.

Don't fight the tears you're feeling,  
You must just let them flow.  
Speak of your child daily  
To many people that you know.

Find others who can understand  
They'll hold you as you cry.  
The questions, we have all asked,  
All the how's and every why.

We will always think of our child,  
No one will have to say a word.  
They will remain in our hearts  
Our precious child remembered.

Author Unknown

A thousand words can't  
bring you back  
I know because I tried  
  
And neither can  
a million tears  
I know because I cried

Unknown





## "...a bear wedged in great tightness."

"In a tape called, 'To Touch a Grieving Heart' there is a wonderful little reminder of the *Winnie the Pooh* story by A. A. Milne. You may recall that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit's hole, he gets stuck tight - so he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort...and thus to help a bear wedged in great tightness.'

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think Grief is like being 'a bear wedged in great tightness.' And, while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that 'we need not walk alone.'"

*Opening remarks of the late Richard Edler's keynote speech at the 1996 TCF National Conference*

## The Keepers of Memories

You make friends because you have things in common.

We are friends because of our children.

The older ones, the younger ones, the ones who never even had a chance to breathe.

They are our reason for being.

Our heartbeat, our life's blood.

Whether we have lots of memories or only a few, we are joined by an unbreakable bond.

We are the ones left behind, to remember and carry the torch for those we remember so lovingly.

We are there for ourselves and each other. Because we understand the pain of loss.

We must also be there for those who unfortunately join our ranks.

Because we are the parents of lost children, the bruised hearts, the keepers of memories.

Cheryl Pelletier TCF, Concord, NH

Grief Shared is  
Grief Lessened

## Lest we forget

It is not how our child died, but they have died. The grief does not change if our child died by accident, illness or they choose to end their life by suicide. The grief is the same and we all have to find our way through it.

The intensity of grief is not predicated on how we lost our child but in fact, that we lost our child, and the grief is the same. If we look at it as if we are all on this lifeboat surrounded by a sea of grief, we have no choice but to help one another.

*Ed Motuzas TCF, Metrowest, Holliston, MA*

## The Grocery Cart

By Alice Monroe, Unknown Chapter

Shopping. Not easy for the newly bereaved. Not easy for the old timers sometimes. Too many memories in those aisles.

Grocery shopping tells a lot about people. The other day I looked into the faces of my fellow cart pushers. The more I looked the more I saw. Stress... worry... pressure. Mostly they seemed hurried, tired... even sad.

I began to wonder how often I take the time to REALLY LOOK at the people in my home.

At dinner that evening I quietly studied the face of my husband...his rough, hard working hands.

I looked at his shoes and wondered where his feet would take him this coming year...and how much would be sorrow and how much would be joy.

And even....would he be here for all of next year?

It was then that I made my only resolution for the year

It is to look, REALLY look at the faces, hands and feet of the people in my life who are still alive and with me.

And not just look...but listen to the sound of their unique voices...and put that in my memory box. Fears that bereaved parents suffer from are:

"Will I be able to remember the sound of his/her voice?" and

"Will I forget what he/she looked like?" I know I wish I had looked and listened more to my son...before he died.

Maybe this is one resolution that is worth keeping...while we still have time.

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## Just An Idea

As you sit and ponder what the New Year will bring for you and your family, try this:

1. Take a notepad and pen and at the top of the page write "This year I hope I can..."
2. Then make a list of what you hope will take place during the year.
3. Later, go step further and number each hope in order of preference and importance
4. Then work on it - one thing at a time. And take it off your list as it's accomplished for a goal is reached.
5. Then you can look at your progress

Please remember, each and every time you accomplish something you set out to do no matter how small or trivial it may seem at the time - THAT IS PROGRESS

TCF Anniston, AL

## January Warmth

Like a tree in winter which has lost its leaves, we look ahead to Spring for new growth and the warmth of the sun to heal the pain in our hearts.

Let us make January a time to reach out to each other and give that warmth from our hearts, and in return, we will all show new growth.

Pat Dodge TCF Sacramento Valley, CA

# Sibling Page

## My First Five Years As An Only Child

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I've aged thirty years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I've accomplished the many things of a typical young adult—learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career. Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother, George, is not here to share each milestone and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children, or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship, usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I've learned to accept that he's not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I'm angry about all of the things that we've missed and all of the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass. In these past five years, I've been forced to grow up too fast. I've been forced into a new outlook on life. I've felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. That person is locked away and is gone forever. Maybe I'm a better person now because of what I've been through. Five years ago, I never thought I'd survive, but I'm still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I've made it this far.

Kristina Steiner TCF, Staten Island, NY

## To Our Surviving Children

*And you were with us  
when the darkness came.*

*You stood and grieved  
and kept yourself alive.*

WE THANK YOU NOW

*We have not always honored  
who you are  
and often did not  
tend your hidden sorrows.*

FORGIVE US NOW

*Because you loved us  
well enough to wait  
until we could return to you  
and know with joy  
and hope and love:  
you are tomorrow.*

WE CELEBRATE YOUR LIFE

*And while we will remember always,  
always the one,  
the many souls who did not live,  
we see you once again  
for what you are:  
the wealth you are,  
the comfort and the promise.*

WE THANK YOU NOW

Sascha Wagner TCF, Des Moines, IA

## 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) 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