



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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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 Nov. 13

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

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 10, 2023

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



TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting - Sunday, Dec. 10 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.** Look for more information on the virtual event in next month's newsletter

Shared Thoughts on Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is the beginning of our holiday season. This once joyous time can become a horrendous anticipation for us. This is the season we like all our children and siblings gathered around us. We enjoy the togetherness, for it is a time to be thankful for each of our family members. We find it difficult for such a large piece to be missing from our family circle.

We suggest you try to discuss your plans with your immediate family, your spouse and children. It not only makes them feel part of the family, but it also removes the tremendous burden of making all the decisions from your shoulders. This also sends the message you know they are hurting; by acknowledging their pain, you open up the door of communication. You have to decide what is best for your family. You may choose to keep it traditional, or make changes. These changes can be temporary or permanent. It may help to talk about what things you were doing just for the sake of tradition. If they aren't meaningful, and are painful, you may choose to drop them.

Some find it helpful to go away; others want to be home. Some have found it very peaceful to devote time to helping others. There are many organizations who need help to serve a meal to others who have no one to spend the holiday with. It is a way of bringing the love for your child or sibling to life. For some, it is impossible to give thanks when your

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
John Ashner, Jr. - Son of John and Grace Ashner	Jun 22	Nov 8
Christopher Brunner - Son of Cynthia Kern	Nov 29	Mar 20
John Counterman, III - Brother of Theresa Legarski	Sep 30	Nov 2
Christopher Daud - Son of Marie Daud	Nov 4	Sep 16
Chelsie Graham - Daughter of Chris and Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
Chase Groeger - Brother of Daisha Hamilton	Nov 23	Jul 16
Jill Harris - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
Michael Leh - Son of Jeneane Leh; Brother of Dayna & Samantha Leh	Nov 11	Aug 19
Joseph Lestishock - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
Emma McNulty - Daughter of Jessica and Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Jacob Miller - Son of William R and Caroline P Miller	Nov 15	Nov 16
Suzanne Miller - Daughter of Russell and Margaret Billig	Nov 28	Sep 28
PJ Pfenning - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
Timothy Printz - Son of Matt and Claire Printz; Brother of Wendy, Micah, Calvin & David	Nov 6	Nov 6
Jason Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler; Son of the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Leo Shiner - Grandson of Morris and Maggie Shiner	Nov 23	Sep 8
Anthony Sisonick - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
Jessica Smolenski - Daughter of Thomas and Pamela Smolenski	Nov 3	Jul 6
Matthew Solderitch - Son of Brenda Solderitch & the Late Stephen Solderitch Sr. ; Brother of Tina Saginario	Nov 24	Nov 3
Weston Weiant - Son of Madeline Weiant	Nov 24	Nov 24
Gilbert Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	Oct 22
Emma Werner - Daughter of Samantha Behler; Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III	Dec 15	Nov 1
Christopher Williamson - Son of Chris and Kim Williamson; Brother of the late Christina Joy Williamson	Nov 12	Nov 12
Paul Woodling - Son of Gregg and Mary Ann Miller	Jul 21	Nov 5
Liam Young - Son of Thomas and Gabrielle Young; Brother of Nathan & Nora	May 13	Nov 14



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
♥ Pat Andrew	Jill Patricia Harris <i>Happy Birthday Jill - Love and Miss You & Pops. Mom, Jeff, Sam and Alex</i>
♥ Linda Hollabaugh & the Late Wayne Hollabaugh	Richard 'Rich' Lee Hollabaugh <i>Beloved son of the late Wayne K Hollabaugh and Linda J Hollabaugh. Happy birthday 12/20</i>
♥ Betty Schuler	Dean Lynn Schuler <i>In loving memory</i>

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

Continued from page 2

grief is very fresh; this is normal for many. Allow yourself to cry, and grieve, if that is all you are capable of this year. In time you will be able to think beyond your pain; don't feel guilty for something you cannot do. Remember it helps others to feel good, when they can do small physical chores for us; if you are in need of their help, ask for it.

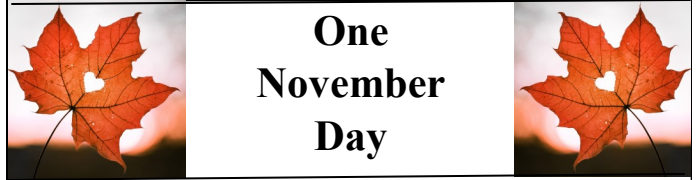
We can't avoid Thanksgiving, and sometimes we even feel a little guilty for not being thankful for what we have left. Our overwhelming grief crowds out our appreciation of what we have. We are human, and it is normal to lament our loss. Perhaps this is the season to enumerate, and be thankful, for friends and family who have helped us through these devastating times. We all wanted more time, but we must remember our pain is so very great because we were given someone very special to share a segment of our life with. For this we are thankful. We also are very thankful for all the friends and support we have in The Compassionate Friends. Your sharing with us has got us through many holidays and given us strength and healing from having passed through another painful event. Each passing event tells us we can survive, and doing our grief work softens our pain. We wish you peace of mind and love, as you remember your child or sibling this Thanksgiving.

*God Bless, Marie Hofmockel
TCF Valley Forge, PA*

Thanksgiving

Our time together was too brief,
Your life on earth numbered in but days.
Yet, how could I have loved you more if I had
held you through the seasons of your life?
When does love begin?
For me the day you first moved within me
Wrapped me in such warmth that it can still
keep out the cold as here I stand missing you
and all that we could have shared.
Death has robbed me of your softness and of
all the dreams I had for you,
But not of my love.
Not even death can take that from me -from us.
And for that, I am thankful.

Karen Nelson, TCF/ Brigham City, UT



Everything we do; Changes
Our life in some way,
This happened to me
One November day

That's when I had
My son; You see,
It was a joyful
Time for me

As time went on
And years went by,
He became his own person
A wonderful guy.

Those who knew Him
Loved Him so much,
It amazes me;
All the lives He touched,

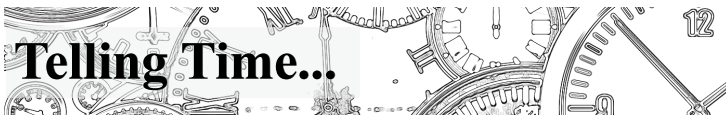
For those of you; That
He never met,
He is one person;
You'd Never Forget,

He's in God's Hands
For He passed away,
But I'll always remember
That one November Day.

*By Sherry Brown, TCF Lehigh Valley, PA
Submitted by Brenda Solderitch*

Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price we pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.

~Rabbi Earl Grollman



Telling Time...

We're about to turn the clocks back. But only one hour. I think, if only I could really turn the clock back. Like Superman, when Lois Lane gets killed. I think that now, more than any other time in my life, I am constantly reminded of time. How much I've lost, how little I seem to have left.

It's holiday time. As I write, Halloween is days away. By the time you are reading this Thanksgiving will be days away. And then, the roller coaster ride to Christmas, Chanukah and another New Year.

I am still brought short each day with the realization that I am moving on through time but Peter is not. At each new meeting I am brought back face to face with the haunting specter of raw, inconsolable, indescribable grief and disbelief. As each newly bereaved parent finds us, I meet myself again and again, And I am once again introduced to the effects of time.

In the beginning time stood still. From the moment I learned of Peter's death, and for months after, it seemed as if time had simply stopped. There were days, when lost in a reverie of disbelief, I would suddenly "come to" to discover hours had passed. When I did finally go out of my house alone, I would be startled to find it had taken me hours to get only a short distance from my house. Where did that time go?

At the end of my first year of grieving, I often felt as though people expected me to be pretty far along towards healing. My anger and resentment began then, when I realized that time had nothing to do with grieving. A friend, coming to her son's second anniversary tells me her employer of more than 20 years is pressuring her to go back on a full time schedule at work. She's told by this 30 year old, unmarried, clueless manager, that "two years should be enough. Time to get back on track", Another friend, sixteen years into her grieving, is startled almost every day when she realizes that in another year, she'll have missed her daughter longer than she had her alive.

A dear, dear friend of mine, a gal I worked with many years ago and who I used to refer to as "the daughter I never had", had a little girl years ago. She was born the day after Peter *was* killed. Today, at 29, she represents all of time to me. She is the measure of all I have lost. As well as what I've gained.

But it is the chronic, constant reminder of time itself

that comes with this territory. Every month brings another marker...a birthday, anniversary, holiday..the first, the second, the third...When do we stop counting? I suppose in the next millennium.

Meanwhile, we continue to mark the times of our lives. Always with the names, the, love and the memories of our beloved children, more remembered than ever. At this, the holidayest time of the year, I wish you all a peaceful time, all season.

Marie Levine, Lovingly lifted fro the TCF Livonia Chapter Newsletter

Do Thanksgiving Day Your Way

Who says we have to follow
Thanksgiving the traditional way?
With all the prescribed
rituals of that holiday?

So what if we don't have
baked ham or turkey?
We're tired of that old bird
so why not some beef jerky?

No, No cranberry sauce!
no candied yams! no pumpkin pie!
(She hated pumpkin pie,
and, truly, that's no lie.)

This is our very first Thanksgiving
without her, you know.
We're not in the mood for all the
fuss - it's still touch-n-go.

Mom's in the kitchen
doing the best she can.
She's crying her eyes out,
flooding the no-stick pan.

So, what about it, gang?
Let's tough it out and avoid the clutter.
Let's go for hoagies, tuna salad,
maybe jelly and peanut butter.

This year we don't have to
be so doggone formal.
Next year, hopefully,
We'll try to be more normal.

~ Author Unknown

Control

By Margaret Gerner TCF St Louis MO

The pain we feel is almost constant for many months, but there are times when it completely overwhelms us. At these times, we can do nothing but pace and wail. We wring our hands. Our bodies tremble with agony and despair. We feel regret; wishing to the depth of our souls that we could redo the yesterday when our child died. We feel intense longing for our child, so intense we don't believe we can stand it another minute. We feel completely alone. It is as though no one exists in this world but us. Between sobs, phrases like "My God, I can't go on", "What am I going to do?" or "It hurts so badly", comes out of our mouths over and over again. We feel as though we are at the bottom of a deep pit and there is no way out. We feel consumed with an indescribable anguish.

It is at these times we might be advised by those around us to "calm down" or to "control ourselves." It is my opinion that that is exactly what we should not do.

Mistakenly, I tried to "control" my emotions after Arthur died, but when I could "control" no longer, my grief would pour out of me in a raging torrent. I noticed that for days after one of these sessions, I felt a great release of pressure, but never did realize that these wailing sessions were helpful and healing.

Every emotion carries with it energy. Sadness, anger, guilt, regret are with us constantly in our grief, but the energy caused by them cannot be released as it builds. It is like a tea kettle. The water is constantly boiling . . . but it is in spurts that the steam pushes itself out the lid. The uncontrolled crying session is the steam of our boiling emotions forcing itself out. As with the lid on the tea kettle, these sessions are our safety valves.

These sessions can last from a few minutes to over an hour. They are self-terminating and they are exhausting. After such a session, we are worn out just as we would be after hard physical exercise. Sometimes, we can even sleep after them. Early in our grief, they may be frequent, but as time goes on and you allow yourself to experience them and not try to inhibit them, they will become farther apart. Don't take the advice of those around you to "get hold of yourself". On the contrary, surrender yourself to your pain. Cry. Wail. Rant. Wring your hands. Voice your anger, your guilts, your regrets. Expend your pent-up emotions. You will feel much better afterwards.

*Tears are the safety valve of the heart
when too much pressure is laid on*

Albert Smith



The Inscription

By Annabelle Gunnet Jones
Bereaved Parents, USA "A Journey Together"

"Here lies an American Soldier
Known but to God."
As I read the words over softly
I said to myself, "How odd!"
For I knew the Unknown Soldier
Ever since he was a lad.
He was just an average lad,
Neither too good nor too bad.
He liked to play ball and marbles,
Climb trees, fish, and swim,
Collect moths and arrowheads.
I watched him grow to manhood
And fall in love with a fair-haired lass,
While a war-torn world away
The cry was "they shall not pass."
I was there on the station platform
When he kissed his sweetheart Goodbye.
There he started his journey
To a foreign land to die.
Letters came from o'er the billows;
What a story they did tell!
Then - the message - he was missing
In the Argonne's flaming hell.
Back across the restless ocean
To his own dear native shore,
they brought his broken body home,
Here to sleep forever more.
Back and forth, the sentry paces
With his firmly shouldered gun,
ever guarding the sleep of the soldier
Called "unknown" by everyone.
But I know his name, so listen!
While I tell it to everyone.
He's not an Unknown Soldier
For his mother called him - Son.

Sibling Page

Why The Death of a Sibling is Like Losing a Part of Yourself

If you're anything like me, you grew up in a fairytale surrounded by siblings who stood 10 feet tall. You grew up with parents who were as brave as super-heroes. You grew up naive to the world around you. Don't get me wrong; I was well aware of what the news never failed to talk about. I knew mothers and fathers could lose their battles with cancer. I knew children could be kidnapped. I knew houses burned down, and car accidents happened almost every day.

But, I had created a world where my family was untouchable, where nothing could ever happen to them because they were mine. Five years ago, a police officer knocked on our front door. It was 10 pm, and I had just gotten ready for bed. "There's been an accident. You need to come to the hospital right away." By this point, I had seen enough TV shows to know this was not what you wanted to hear from a police officer, especially not at 10 pm, and especially not when your older brother still hadn't made it home.

I lost a brother that day. I lost a cheerleader, a mentor and a best friend. The safe space I had created so easily disappeared, and I was left to tackle the world without the one person who had always paved a path before me. There's no word to describe the loss of a sibling. If you lose a spouse, you're a widow or widower. If you lose your parents, you're an orphan. But if you lose a sibling, you just become the girl who lost her brother. My therapist described it as losing a limb. If someone tells you it gets better with time, the person's lying to you. Yes, cuts get better and wounds do heal, but when you lose an arm, it's foolish to await the day it "gets better." You simply learn to live with one arm. I learned to do the things I know he would have liked. I learned to listen to the songs we sang together in the car without breaking down in tears. I learned - and I am still learning - to function normally without him just a phone call away. However, "normal" has lately been like a blanket too short for a bed. Sometimes it covers you just fine, and other times it leaves you shaking in the cold. I've come to find the worst part is I never know which one it's going to be when I wake up.

It's been almost five years since that day. Some days the ache is a little less than before, but other days it makes me want to lock myself in my room. And some days, I still feel like I am stuck in a void. There is no statute of limitations on grief. There is no time limit to waking up crying, or having to leave the grocery store because you see your sibling's old

friends. There is no special cure for those dull aches in your heart that don't seem to ever go away.

But, coming from a sister who thought she would never find the light again, know there will come a day when the thought of that loved one brings a smile to your face instead of leaving you gasping for a breath you cannot find. There will come a day when you find yourself talking about your sibling and you do not feel uncomfortable. There will come a day when the universe sends you a sign to let you know your sibling is doing OK. And there will come a day when the 19 years you were able to have with your sibling becomes enough for the 19 more you'll never have.

There is no other love like the love for a brother, and no other love like the love from a brother. And if you're lucky to have a brother who was also your best friend, that love is going to cover you during the best of times and hold your hand through the worst.

Written by Kady Braswell
(for *Unwritten*)

Thank You to Charlotte NC TCF
Newsletter Jan/Feb 2020



This Thanksgiving

This Thanksgiving and always,

Through the grief,

Through the tears,

Through the loneliness,

Through the fears,

We Are Thankful
We had Are Brothers And Sisters

Khaki Chambers, TCF Pensacola, FL

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) 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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Phone

Email Address

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I would like to make a donation of _____ ☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of ☐ A Chapter Gift (without memorial or honorarium)

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. Deadlines listed above. Late submissions or those that do not indicate an edition will be published in the next edition.

Special Text - Brief Messages Please. Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

Please designate which of the following your gift is for (you may circle more than one)

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events