



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume 38 Issue 1

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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 Jan. 8

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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Take Your Time

The one phrase we hear more than any other is "It'll take time for you to get over your child's death." We know that this is spoken with care and love. But little do we know at the beginning of our grief just what time means: The first time, the day time, the night time, the last time, all of these times. The one thing we can say is "take it." Take all the time you need. Grief is hard work and we need to take the time for all of the aspects we talk so much about and really work through it.

Take the time to feel, it's hard but worth it. We can't just push those feelings aside because they are part of who we are, how we've managed, and the life we've had. All of our life experiences combine to affect our feelings.

Take the time to talk. Talk to anyone who seems to care about you. Ask your friends and family if they will take the time to listen. If you need a telephone listener call the National Office or one of the local chapter listeners. We have time to listen.

Take the time to read. When you read the experience of others, you will realize that you're not alone. Maybe a special book will help you understand what is happening to you during this time we call bereavement, take the time to read and re-read the paragraphs or chapters that help.

Take the time to physically take care of yourself. If you like to walk, jog, or run, go out and use that time to help you feel better. Get enough rest, take the time to sleep late some days, or go to bed earlier if you need to. Sleeping may be an escape but if it helps you, take the time for an extra few hours. Take care of yourself by eating better. Try to understand that food gives you some energy and that food helps to satisfy unmet needs. Food is always better for you rather than drugs or alcohol and a small weight gain or loss is not unusual. Take the time to understand what is happening to your body.

Take the time to be angry or guilty without letting these feelings ruin your life. You may think that your life is ruined anyhow and who cares, but anger and guilt turned inward can destroy your self-esteem faster than anything. Take time to sort through these feelings and acknowledge them, then let them go.

Know that when someone says "It'll take time" we can nod and try to accept that as part of our getting through these days, months and years.

Remember that someday you will take the time to help someone else and that time will be the most satisfying time of all.

Therese Goodrich, TCF National

***“ Grief
is hard work
and we need to
take the time for all
of the aspects we
talk so much about
and really work
through
it”***

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

| | Birth | Anniv. |
|--|--------|--------|
| Brian Burke - Son of Rich & Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke | Jan 3 | Oct 9 |
| Mark Dilts, Jr - Son of Mark & Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts | Jan 6 | Jul 8 |
| Marguerite "Maggie" Faber - Daughter of Harry & Carol Faber | Jan 17 | Jan 17 |
| Brenda Fehr Hatrak - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr, Sr.; Sister of Barbara R. Burgin & David A. Fehr, Jr.; Granddaughter of Elwood & Mary Mann and Warren & Rose Fehr | Aug 31 | Jan 8 |
| Jessica Finlayson - Daughter of Eric & Jean Dalstad; Sister of Rebecca Dalstad | Mar 19 | Jan 22 |
| David Grozier - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance | Jan 15 | Jan 14 |
| Oliver Klitsch – Son of Shawn & Abigail Klitsch, Brother of Vivian; Grandson of Mark & Pamela Klitsch | Jan 24 | Oct 15 |
| Morgan Knupp - of Ashlee Knupp | Jan 25 | Jan 25 |
| John Leonard, Jr - Son of Jack & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen | Jul 27 | Jan 6 |
| Andrea Luecke - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke | Jan 30 | Oct 23 |
| Marissa Monteverde - Daughter of Nadine Monteverde; Sister of Tanya & Jeremy | Jan 23 | Nov 4 |
| James Ralls - Son of Tina Ralls; Brother of Timothy & Geoffrey | Jan 2 | Aug 17 |
| Shane Uttard - Son of Brenda Deubler | Jan 15 | May 13 |
| Victoria Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zacary Volkert | Jan 14 | Feb 16 |
| Jonathan Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner | Aug 20 | Jan 22 |
| Liam Whetstone - 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.

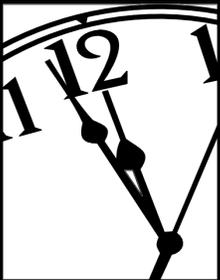
| Contributor | Loved One |
|--------------------------|--|
| ♥ Mr & Mrs James Schneck | Lauren Lynn Schneck <i>Forever 5 - Love and Miss You Mom & Dad</i> |
| ♥ Carol Miller | Maggie" Jo Faber <i>Love and miss you every day. Mom</i> |
| ♥ Rella Daniels | Jonelle & Anthony Sisonick <i>In loving memory of my Daughter & Son at Christmas</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

“Time itself does not heal, it is what we make of that time that heals... We cannot sit back and say "time will heal me." Time is simply the movement of the clock. Our successful return to comfortable living is what we do while that clock is moving.”

Margaret Gerner, TCF, St. Louis, MO



New Grief

New grief is about a toothbrush
lying dry on the bathroom sink.

Its about a sweater tossed carelessly on his bed
It's about a folded bag of Cajun Chips with a few
left that he should have come back to finish.

It's about a folder neatly labeled "American History"
with notes about the balance of trade
scrawled in preparation
for some future reckoning some silly test.

It's about bumping into him
in the hall as he rushed out and I rushed in.
It's about every instant spent folding clothes
and only half listening, not really noticing
when I could have been studying his face,
hearing his needs, being with him.

It's about driving past the high school
where he should be
and being overwhelmed by mute,
inextinguishable rage.

New grief is about silence I can't speak across
and emptiness I can't reach across.
Most of all, it's about horrible,
unequivocal ... finality.

Old Grief

Older grief is gentler.
It's about sudden tears
swept in by a strand of music.
It's about haunting echoes
of first pain,
at anniversaries.

It's about feeling his presence
for an instant one day
while I'm dusting his room.
It's about early pictures
that invite me
to fold him in my arms again.

Older grief is about aching
in gentler ways,
rarer longing,
less engulfing fire.
Older grief is
about searing pain
wrought into tenderness.

*Linda Zelenka,
TCF Orange Park
Jacksonville FL*

Memories

*Unique as snowflakes
Impossible to hold but for a moment
Yet when one is gone
There is another
Sliding down upon the first*

*Until they become
Blankets of protection
Against the storms of loneliness
Memories, sweet memories...*

Marcia P. Alig, TCF Mercer Area, NJ

New Year's Resolution For Bereaved Parents

I RESOLVE...

...That I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving, and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.

...That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.

...That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because someone else feels I should be “brave” or getting better” or “healing by now.”

...That I will talk about my child as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because they can't deal with their own feelings.

...That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child cannot possibly know how it feels.

...That I will not blame myself for my child's death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job of parenting I could possibly have done. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming,

...I will remind myself that this is a normal part of the grief process and it will pass.

...That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

...That I will commune with my child at least once a day in whatever way feels comfortable and natural to me, and that I won't feel compelled to explain this communion to others or to justify or even discuss it with them.

...That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need to help me cope with my grief.

...To know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation, lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all normal parts of the grief process.

...To know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.

...To let myself heal and not to feel guilty about feeling better.

...To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous — that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that “slipping backward” is also a normal part of the grief process and these moods, too, will pass.

...To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit.

...That I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get over my depression.

...That even though my child is dead, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

Nancy A. Mower, TCF-Honolulu, Hawaii

Tracks in the Snow



It had been at least three days since the last snowfall, when I realized I had to head into town for groceries, and out to the cemetery for one of my weekly visits. I cursed the snow often for covering up all the life I saw in the summer and spring. Everything was just a frozen blanket of white, a barren ice land, when the snow fell. The fact that my daughter, Kyla Louise, was buried underneath that thick coating of ice in the cemetery, made me dislike the snow even more.

So on this day, I grumbled as I scraped my van windows in preparation for the long haul into town. My wheels crunched ice and slid as I pulled slowly out of the driveway. I let my mind wander into thoughts of a warm spring and the drive into town. I dreamed of flowers and birds, not frozen ponds and lifeless skies. I wondered if I would even be able to get into the cemetery to visit my darling's grave. Curse this snow!

After grocery shopping I headed out to the cemetery feeling depressed and hopeless. Why had my daughter died at the tender age of four from a brain tumor? Why was I having to visit her grave covered in snow, and out of my warm arms? What was the point of it all? I shivered as I neared the cemetery. It looked like not many people had been out since the last snowfall because the ground was still a flat solid sheet of snow. Or was it?

As I let the van quietly creep into the cemetery, my eyes gazed at the snow, and a small laugh escaped my lips. Across the rows and rows of frozen graves were animal tracks going every which way. Birds, rabbits, deer and who know what other types of creatures had found a quiet, safe place to play. The tracks told of deer leaping over headstones, romping in the snow. There were tracks of rabbits darting in and out of the bushes between the headstones. Bird tracks gently dotted the snow until they disappeared where a winged one had taken flight.

I parked the van and stepped out into the glistening snow, As I walked toward my daughter's grave, I saw that a bird had visited her earlier, and that a rabbit had made a resting place under the bushes near her grave. A set of tracks even went back and forth between a pinwheel (Kyla's grandma had left at the grave) and a bush. What a wondrous sight!

My little angel even had visitors when I could not be there. As I stood quietly pondering this change in my point of view, something caught my eye a few rows up. I looked and there were two small deer running after each other. They stopped and looked at me, and I at them. Tears sprung to my eyes, and my heart soared. What majesty! They stood there still for a second, and then they bounded off and over the fence.

I pressed my hands into the snow on my sweet Kyla's grave, leaving my hand prints. Then I drew a heart with my finger. As I walked away, I looked back and saw my own tracks, proof that I had been there, proof of my love. It was then that I realized what a gift the snow was. It had shown me how full of life the cemetery and the world really are, even though we think it is frozen and desolate. On my drive back home I looked around at the shimmering white land before me. I saw that the snow protected and preserved the land beneath it like a warm blanket, until the land could once again rise anew.

Juliet Freitag, Bereavement Magazine www.bereavementmag.com

Don't Scrape the Ice

The season for ice and snow is upon us (again)! Although we want to make sure the grave site markers are visible, it causes permanent damage to some markers if snow and ice are scraped off. Even plastic scrapers will mar bronze. Before using salt, snow removal chemicals, etc, it is suggested that you check with the groundskeeper at your cemetery.

Lovingly Lified from TCF Billings, MT Newsletter

Sibling Page

Letting Go vs. Forgetting

When my brother passed away, I had a difficult time distinguishing between "letting go" and "forgetting". I felt that to let go of T.C. would mean to start forgetting him. Needless to say, I was unwilling to do this. Eventually I learned I could let go without forgetting my brother. Learning to let go was and is a day-to-day process. The memory of my brother is stronger and clearer today because it is not as clouded by pain. With each day there is more acceptance.

The reason I'm sharing this with you is because I used to be very concerned that T.C.'s friends would forget him. It hurt to think of all of them going on with their lives without T.C. My family received visits, cards, and letters when T.C. passed away. Slowly, however, the contact became less and less.

I met a woman the other day who recognized my name. We talked for awhile and I learned that her daughter was very close to my brother. I also learned that her daughter continues to visit the accident site and remembers T.C. and their friendship.

This made me understand that the power of love is stronger than I ever imagined. Not only has my memories of my brother remained clear, but he is remembered by his friends. I'm sure some of you can understand these feelings and I wanted to share this with you. Maybe it will help you to understand that you can let go without forgetting. Maybe it will remind you that a person lives on in the hearts of many.

Judy Cloer' TCF Tampa, FL

Just for Siblings

Remember...

Its okay: To cry and feel depressed. You've lost a great deal. If the feelings get to scary or overwhelming, find a caring friend (no matter what age) and talk about it.

Its okay: To want to copy some of your siblings habits and interests, but be yourself too.

Its okay: To live "in the past" for a little while. It is one way to keep alive the memory of your brother or sister. However, you have a life too - one that should be lived to the fullest.

Its okay: To have fun, enjoy life and laugh again

Its okay: To forgive yourself for fights, arguments and mean things you said or did to your brother or sister.

Its okay: TO GO ON LIVING !

Lifted from the TCF pamphlet "When a brother or sister dies"

*"in the pain of loss
reach deeply into your being,
access the love that resides there,
that will sustain you
until you meet again."*

© Alison Stormwolf

Did you know that The Compassionate Friends hosts a chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings?

To join go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the "Find Support" menu. There you will find options for moderated chatrooms and private facebook pages and information on how to join.



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)*

Mail Love Gifts to:

Address

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

Phone

Email Address

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