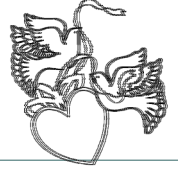




The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 38 Issue 2

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February

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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 Feb 12

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 Storm of Grief

I've often thought about how differently grief affects those left behind when someone has died. To me there are three groups of bereaved. There are those that lose someone they loved very much and are most affected. The middle group are those that cared about the person and will miss them, but their death doesn't change their lives. The third group are sorry that the person has died, but are largely unaffected by their death.

Now envision those groups on a mountain. When my son died, I felt like I was on a mountaintop, alone with a storm raging around me. Thunder and lightning filled the sky, thick clouds enveloped me, and a cold hard rain fell upon me. Winds buffeted my body from every side. There was no shelter, no place to sit or lie down. Others who were suffering as much as I (my husband and daughters) were on their own mountaintop, and we could derive no comfort from each other. I stood there, sometimes railing against God, sometimes feeling as if my heart had been ripped out, sometimes just feeling an emptiness so deep, I feared I would drown in it.

Days, weeks, months passed. The middle group of people stood on the side of the mountain (close friends and relatives). They also were caught in the storm, but they had some shelter and each other. They wanted to comfort me but the path upward was winding and rocky and I could find no path down to them. The last group of people were at the bottom of the mountain in the valley. There, the sun was shining and the breeze was gentle. They could see the storm I was caught in, but could do nothing to help me. Sometimes the storm would subside, and I could see something besides dismal gray. I had respite from the wind and rain. But this would be followed by another raging storm. Eventually the sky would clear, and I was able to find a path to those that cared and could offer me hugs and a shoulder to cry on. The storm was still there, but there was also shelter and I wasn't alone.

It has been 12 years since Todd died, and I have been able to come completely down off that desolate mountaintop and live in the valley of sunshine. Sometimes I stay there quite a while. Sometimes I climb that mountain and experience that same emptiness and sadness. We all know that this kind of storm may brew on those special days- birthdays, holidays, family events. We are also blind-sided by those times that just take our breath away ... being in a place they loved, hearing their music, smells, movies, ball games, or seeing their friends. We really have no control over these unexpected, sudden storms. I have learned to give into them and let the tears fall.

I can live with these storms and accept them as part of my life because my child lived and I loved him with all my heart. I cannot change the fact that my child has died, and I will not change my love.

Barb Seth, TCF Madison, WI

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Tyler Balog - Son of Jeff and Grace Balog; Brother of Troy Balog	Mar 4	Feb 6
Gabriel Benner - Son of Baily Benner	May 4	Feb 9
Hope Davidson - Daughter of Dean and Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Aug 8	Feb 8
Eileen Collins Gant - Daughter of The Late John & Dorothy Collins; Sister of John, Steven, Kathleen & Brian Collins & MaryAnn Watkins	Mar 25	Feb 14
Robert Grozier, II - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Feb 15	Jun 11
Brian Gum - Son of Geary and Brenda Gum	Feb 21	Mar 5
Heather Hawn - Daughter of Mike and Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
David Heard - Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	May 20	Feb 10
Matt Kush - Son of Rick and Ann Kush; Brother of Mike and Jenn	Aug 24	Feb 10
Ed McNally - Son of Don and Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29	Feb 11
Michael Milot - Son of John and Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
Mardelle Parenti-Blume - Daughter of Brian and Nancy Kleckner	Feb 9	Mar 1
Steven Poliquin - Son of Chris and Eva Poliquin; Grandson of Louise Mazza	Oct 8	Feb 23
Eric Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Feb 15	May 20
Nicholas Savacool - Son of Howard and Laura Savacool; Brother of Brandon, Candace & Lacie	Feb 27	Apr 1
Constance Stewart - Daughter of Joanne Stewart; Sister of Keith Stewart & The Late Kevin J. Stewart	Sep 23	Feb 1
Kade Veltri - Son of Kerianne Veltri	Feb 5	Aug 26
Stephanie Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
Victoria Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zacary Volkert	Jan 14	Feb 16



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



No Love Gifts this Month

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**

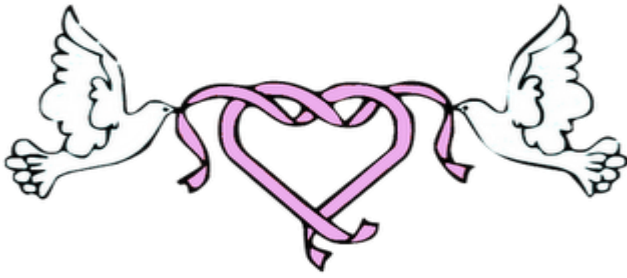
★ **United Way Payroll Contributors**

★ **The Matt Kush Foundation**
In Memory of Matt Kush

*“They that love beyond the world
cannot be separated by it.”*

William Penn





Heaven's Children

Do you suppose they meet like us
To lend support and love?
As we assemble, do they gather, too,
Watching from above?

Do you suppose they ask our God
To care for parents, here?
Just as we beseech Him
To hold our children dear?

Do you suppose, among themselves,
They comfort one another?
When they see deep grief consume
Their Father and their Mother?

Do you suppose, together,
They wipe away our tears?
Holding hands, as we do
To cleanse away our fears?
Do you suppose they listen
To the breaking hearts we share?
As we tell our stories
Our tragedies laid bare?

And, do you suppose they know the Truth,
These children who we adore?
Knowing fully that God's Love
In Abundance He will outpour?

And, do you, suppose they understand
Far better than we mortals?
That peace and Joy and soul's content
Await us at the portals?

And, do you suppose until the day
They see us face to face
They're tugging on God's Heartstrings
To keep us in His Grace?

Sue Smith, TCF Oklahoma

SNOW

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again, even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them to briefly, but we hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always. At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

*Denise Falzone,
TCF, Lake Area, MI*

GRIEF

There is no right way
There is no wrong way
I must learn to do it my way
And you, my friend
Must learn to do it your way.

*Tina Goodale,
TCF, Valley Forge PA*

Letting Go of the Pain

A few weeks or a few months, after your child has died, you'll probably find yourself in a situation where you find yourself laughing or having a good time, then you say STOP laughing or having a good time and think to yourself, "How can I dare laugh or have any fun, now my child has died and I hurt so bad?"

We've all had this feeling in the early stages of our grief. I urge you newly bereaved, PLEASE don't feel guilty about enjoying the happiness that comes from "LIFE". When you find yourself laughing and enjoying something in life, it doesn't mean that you have forgotten your dead child...it just means that you are "letting go" of some of the pain.

All of our lives there will be tears and all of our lives there should be laughter. When people used to say to me, "You must put it behind you and let go of your child and start living again," I wondered what they meant by "IT". I would get very angry. How dare those people think that I could ever "let go" of my child, or even want to...but after a while I realized that I don't have to "let go" of my child in order to live again. I just have to "let go of the pain" that his death caused.

His LIFE will always be part of me, and so will his death; I'll never forget him. But I don't have to keep the grief and pain with me always...So if you see me cry...I'm "letting go" of some pain. And when you see me laughing or having a good time, I'm living life again.

Verna Smith TCF, Fort Worth, TX

It is a Time for Love

February has fewer days than most months, and that is maybe of special significance to us, as our children had fewer days than most.

When we think of this month, the most outstanding day, perhaps, is St Valentine's Day. It is a time for love.

When we were school aged, we had a special chance to give and receive cards in those decorated boxes in our primary classrooms. Perhaps it is the one holiday that children can really do something for everyone.

Addressing a card to each and every classmate made you think of how you felt about each one and wonder about how they felt about you.

Love is found in every day of every year, but February and Valentine's Day is very special. I wish I could remember just how it felt to get a "nicer" Valentine from someone I had sent a "nicer" one to.

It is so long ago, and there have been so many much more significant happenings in my life. But sometimes, I'd like to remember just how it felt, I am sending along this Valentine Love Note to each of you right now and hope that you know it is one of the "nicer" ones.

Because each of you is very special to me. Somehow I don't wonder how you feel, somehow I know. As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's, We begin to find a different kind of love that we never expected to experience.

Margaret H. Gerner, TCF, St. Louis, MO

**"Who, then can so softly bind up the wound of another
as he, who has felt the same wound himself?"**

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas and Martha Jefferson had 6 children, 5 girls and 1 boy. Five of his six children died: four of his daughters and his son. His wife, Martha, died at age 33. After Jefferson's death, little envelopes with locks of hair from his wife and children and words of love written in his own handwriting were found in a secret drawer in his cabinet. It was obvious that they had been handled frequently.

I Know You By Heart

There's time and space between
where we are and where we've been.

I grieve for what I cannot have
or ever hold again
Just when I think I'm all alone
cause you're so far away
It suddenly occurs to me
I see you everyday

You're that hint of inspiration
urging me to carry on
A boost of needed energy
when all my strength is gone
You're a single shining ray of hope
when faith is hard to find
And twenty-twenty vision
when grief has left me blind

You're a lonely roads companion
when it's hard to find a friend
A much needed reminder
that good-bye is not the end
You're calm and reassurance
when I scream for answers why
A gentle voice that whispers
daddy it's okay to cry

You're part of everything I am
and all I'll ever be
The one who when I'm at my worst
still sees the best in me
And though you're just outside my reach
We are never far apart
I recognize you everywhere
child I know you by heart

Alan Pedersen

Alan Pedersen is an award-winning speaker, songwriter and recording artist. His inspirational message of hope and his music have resonated deeply with those facing a loss or adversity in their lives and have made him one of the most popular and in-demand presenters in the world on finding hope after loss.



I Can Tell

I can tell by that look friend, that we need to talk.
So come take my hand and let's go for a walk.

See I'm not like the others - I won't shy away.
Because I want to hear what you've got to say.

Your child has died and you need to be heard.
But they don't want to hear a single word.

They say your child's with God, so be strong.
They say all the "right" things that somehow seem wrong.

I'll walk in your shoes for more than a mile.
I'll wait while you cry and be glad if you smile.

I won't criticize you or judge you or scorn.
I'll just stay and listen 'til night turns to morn.

Yes, the journey is hard and unbearably long.
And I know that you think that you're not quite that strong.

So just take my hand 'cause I've got time to spare.
And I know how it hurts, friend, for I have been there.

See, I owe a debt you can help me repay.
For not so long ago, I was helped the same way.

And I stumbled and fell through a world so unreal.
So believe when I say that I know how you feel.

I don't look for praise or financial gain.
And I'm sure not the kind who gets joy out of pain.

I'm just a strong shoulder who'll be here 'til the end.
I'll be your Compassionate Friend !!!

Steven L. Channing,
Unknown Chapter

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, nor touched, but are felt in the heart” ~Helen Keller

Sibling Page

Who Am I Now

Who am I now that my sibling has died? I have asked myself that question many times over the last four years.

When I think of my brother, Sean, I think of how things used to be. I also think of all the things he will miss.

For example, my husband or my children will never know Sean. Sean will never have children. There are just so many things that he will miss. I began to question who I was about a month after Sean died. He and I shared a great love of music. When I think of music, I think of Sean. At first, every song I heard made me cry. After a while, though, I began to try to find a deeper meaning in the songs. I know that a lot of teenagers and young adults identify important times in their lives by music. I am one of those people.

Now, I am trying to figure out what place the music has in my life. After Sean died, music took on a new meaning for me. The music I sing and listen to is my special connection to my brother. The song "Because You Love Me" by Celine Dion was especially powerful for me. I came to realize that, through simply loving and supporting me, my brother had helped to shape the person who I was becoming and who I wanted to become. I have realized now that my life's direction has taken a slight detour. I have had to reroute my image of myself.

When I hear music, I see my brother, and I hope that will never change. When I saw myself, in the

past, I saw Sean by my side. That picture has now been altered. The biggest part of the question, "Who am I now?" is also "Am I still a sister?" The answer to that is a simple yes! Sean will always be my brother and I will be his sister. Forever. Peace until next time.

Traci Morlock BP/USA St.

People Think

People think we're fine, you know
They say, "Oh, siblings heal so fast"
But they don't know the empty feelings
Of our long for the past

People think we're fine, you know
"Look how they've resumed their lives", they say
But they don't know of our troubled hearts,
Or the loneliness from day to day

People think we're fine, you know
"See how they're getting over it?" they surmise
But they don't know that we've learned
to laugh and smile,
Only to complete our broken heart's disguise



*Mary Matthews
TCF Fort Lauderdale, FL.*

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.



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We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753

TCF Easton - 610-515-3526

TCF Quakertown - 215-703-8431

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing)

TCF Pocono - 570 - 350 - 6695

(484) 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

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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