



# ***The Compassionate Friends***

## ***Lehigh Valley Chapter***

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



Volume 39 Issue 10

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**October**

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is an international non-profit self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

#### **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.

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Chapter 1562

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**Our Chapter Meetings** are held at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Dining Room, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm

All bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings (over the age of 16) are welcome to attend. Participation in group sharing is confidential and voluntary. Our hope is that being among others who understand you may feel free to talk, cry and share, but it is okay to just come and listen too.

We invite you to bring a picture of your child to display at the meeting for their birth or anniversary month or at any time. We also welcome refreshments brought in honor of your child.

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

#### **Upcoming Meetings and Events**

- Monday October 13
- Monday November 10
- Monday December 8

*Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the Webpage, Facebook page & texted to the meeting list members*

#### **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 take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our members 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.

#### **To Our Seasoned Members**

Think back to your first meeting, You were hurt, confused and felt alone in your grief. Remember the comfort you felt when you found you weren't alone and that others that had been where you were and survived. Remember the love and support you felt as fellow members offered on your grief journey. Now you are stronger and may not feel the need to attend meetings for aid and comfort. We need you though. New members need you. They need your encouragement, support and wisdom. If you haven't attended a meeting in awhile please consider coming back to offer hope to those who now feel lost and see no hope.

## 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

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor

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

### Newsletter Editor Contact

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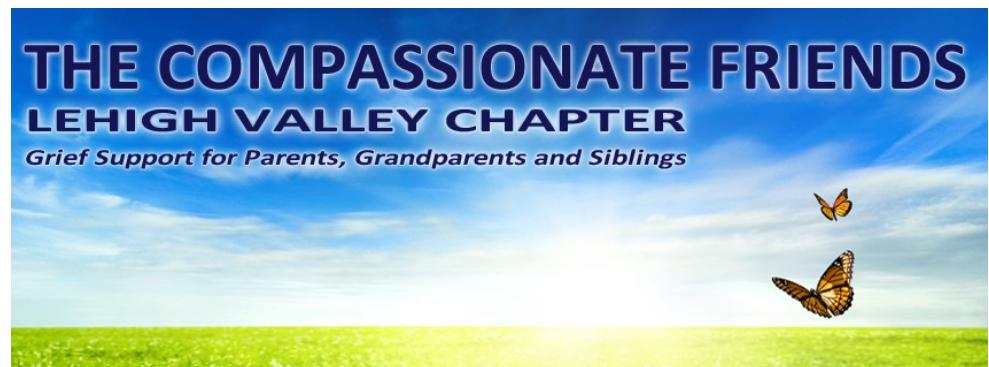
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- by email:

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## Chapter News

We are happy to announce that our chapter has a new Facebook page. Please like and follow for reminders of upcoming meetings, events, helpful articles. We are also looking into remembrances postings and hope to be offering that in the near future.

To find our page please search for "The Compassionate Friends of the Lehigh Valley".

## Feelings of Guilt

"Doctor, one of the most awful feelings is guilt."

How often I have heard this refrain from a parent who has lost a child. Guilt can be an overwhelming and crushing burden; but it can be handled if one knows its roots. One feels guilty when one fails to fulfill obligations that he believes he has towards another individual. When it comes to our children, we have many real obligations. However, there are two obligations which are unrealistic, and which may be the root of much of our guilt.

Deep down many people believe that when it comes to their children they must be omniscient and omnipotent. Omnipotence implies that one must always know what will happen to one's child. If a problem arises, the parent will know how to resolve it. Therefore, if my child is killed in an automobile accident, I should have known he would be in danger and prevented him from entering the car. If my child died from disease. I should have known how to care for him, or at least, which doctor, treatment or hospital would have cured him. If my child has died by suicide. I should have seen and understood the signs, or known what words to use to instill in him the will to live.

Omnipotence implies that one must always have the power to protect one's child from others or from himself. Omnipotence also implies that I have the power to keep my child alive. If my child dies in a skiing accident, I should have had the presence of mind to stop him from going no matter how much he wanted to go. If

*Continued on page 4*

## Our Children Remembered Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Brian Burke</b> - Son of Rich and Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
<b>Christopher Cole</b> - Son of Donald Cole; Brother of Lauren Cole	Oct 10	Sep 10
<b>David DeLong</b> - Son of The Late Gene & Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong	Oct 23	Dec 7
<b>Oliver Klitsch</b> - Son of Shawn and Abigail Klitsch; Grandson of Mark and Pam Klitsch	Jan 24	Oct 15
<b>Nykolas LaRosa</b> - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
<b>Andrea Luecke</b> - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
<b>Joseph McDonald</b> - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
<b>Jennifer Ortelli - Bryant</b> - Daughter of Wayne & Rebecca Ortelli; Sister of Christian Ortelli & the late Amy Ortelli	Oct 6	Sep 3
<b>Steven Poliquin</b> - Son of Chris Poliquin & The Late Eva Poliquin, Grandson of Louise Mazza	Oct 8	Feb 23
<b>Christine Rappleyes</b> - Daughter of Wendy Meixell	Oct 12	Nov 20
<b>Deanna Renner</b> - Daughter of Ginger Renner & The late Merle Renner	Oct 11	Oct 22
<b>Scott Rothrock</b> - Son of Larry and Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael and Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22



*Thank you for your "Love Gifts"*



From: \_\_\_\_\_ Loved One

♥Pam Klitsch

**Oliver Klitsch**

*2 years since we had one of your "bestest" hugs. Holding you in our hearts until we can hold you in Heaven! Baba, Pop Pop, Mommy, Daddy & Viv*

**Love Gifts** are heartfelt expressions of love given in memory of our precious children, family members, and friends. With no dues or fees our chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of Love Gift donations. Gifts can be made in any amount and are tax deductible. Please use the form on the last page of this newsletter and mail or bring to the meeting.

*Many thanks to the following for their ongoing contributions to the chapter*

**Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville**  
For our meeting space

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

**United Way**  
**Payroll Contributors**

### On Joy and Sorrow

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only  
that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in  
truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

*Kahlil Gibran from "The Prophet"*

*Continued from page 2*

my child is murdered, I should have had the power to defend him against the murderer. If my child succumbs to an illness, I should have had the power to cure him or find a cure.

When our children die we feel that we have failed them in our obligation to be omniscient and omnipotent. As a result, we feel overwhelming guilt. What is obvious (except to the grieving parent) is that, as human beings, we are neither omniscient or omnipotent. These attributes must be left to God. We must struggle with being merely mortal. Furthermore, being omniscient and omnipotent would most probably cause us to overprotect our children never allowing them to grow through their own mistakes, never allowing them to grow up.

If the above is true and we understand that our feelings of guilt may be rooted in false obligations of omnipotence and omniscience, why can we not let go of our guilt feelings? Perhaps, because guilt is another link, another connection to our dead child. To give up the guilt (we may feel) is giving up our connection with our beloved child. From my experience with bereaved parents, giving up the guilt is only giving up some of the pain and some of the hurt. In so doing, we remove an obstacle to loving the child's memory. Guilt hurts. In letting go of guilt we do not lose the memory of our child's death, but rather gain the ability to rejoice in the memories of his life.

*Dr. Stuart Grant, Grief Relief Magazine*

## Strength and Courage

It takes strength to be firm

It takes courage to be gentle

It takes strength to stand guard

It takes courage to let down your guard

It takes strength to conquer

It takes courage to surrender

It takes strength to be certain

It takes courage to have doubt

It takes strength to feel a friend's pain

It takes courage to feel your own pain

It takes strength to hide feelings

It takes courage to show them

It takes strength to endure abuse

It takes courage to stop it

It takes strength to stand alone

It takes courage to lean on another

It takes strength to love

It takes courage to be loved

It takes strength to survive

It takes courage to live

*John G. Young, Mississaiya, Ont., Canada*



## Halloween . . . Still a Holiday to Remember

Two Halloweens have now passed since my 8-year-old Stephanie and 5-year-old Stephen left us to live with God.

Even before the kids were old enough to go trick or treating, I still recall their delight at the costumes worn by all the neighborhood kids who came to the door. I still remember how thrilled Stephen was to be handing out the candy when he was only one and half years old. We still have a picture of him holding the plate of goodies. If you look close, you can see where he took a bite out of one of the candy bars (with the wrapper on) and set it back on the plate.

I can still remember the all too few times I was able to take my children out trick-or-treating. I remember my daughter dressed up as a nurse, offering to "fix-up" all those other trick or treaters who were obviously hurting with all that fake blood they were wearing.

I remember Stephen wearing his great pumpkin outfit. We stuffed it so full of padding that when he fell down, not only did he not get hurt, he had to be physically picked up because he was flailing his arms around like a beetle on its back.

I can still see Stef holding Stephen's little hand and patiently leading him up the walkway and helping him hold open his bag so that the candy would find its mark. She always made certain he said thank you for the candy. It usually came out "thank-woo."

The first Halloween following their deaths I remember driving home with tears streaming down my face as I watched the other trick-or-treaters roaming up and down the streets. My wife and I fled our home, depositing bags of candy for our next door neighbors to hand out for us. Last year we found the courage to stick around and greet the ghosts and goblins who found their way to our door. The funny thing was, we felt as

dressed up as the trick-or-treaters. We were wearing our "happy face" masks.

The memories are now starting to fade of the Halloweens before our children died. It won't be too long and I'll be leading Christopher, our new son who is now a year old, up those driveways just like I did before. I feel sad that Stef and Steve can't be there. But you know, I have a feeling that if I hold out my hands and close my eyes, two little gloved hands will slip into mine and I'll again hear in unison, "Just one more house, Daddy!"

*Wayne Loder,  
TCF Lakes Area, MI*



## My Cover-Up Mask

I wake in the morning with tears in my eyes. I have to face another day without my child. I prepare to go to work and put on my "cover-up mask" as I go out to face the world.

I get my work done and even chat and sometimes smile at my co-workers. And they say, "My, how well she seems to be handling her loss." If they only knew what I am suffering under my "cover-up mask." My work day is over, and I go home and remove my "cover-up mask," and the tears come again.

I go to bed, as the darkness of night envelopes me and sleep eludes me, the tears come again. I have gotten through another day without my child. I have learned I must take one day at a time for the rest of my life, since it will never be the same again.

*Joan Watson, TCF/Salisbury, MD*

**Your death has meant a new life -  
MINE.**

**For I, too, am gone as I was  
when you were here.  
I am someone new  
I'm not sure who...**

*Evon Buckley TCF, Livonia, MI*

## The Same - But Different

### *Loss of an infant*

Have you ever seen that commercial with the little girl and the Ritz Bits crackers? The announcer is trying to get her to say whether Ritz Bits are the same as regular Ritz crackers or different.

The little girl tries various explanations. First, she tells him how they are alive. "So they're the same?" he asks. "No silly," she answers, "one's little and one's big." "So they're different," he says. She rolls her eyes. Finally, in frustration, she says, "Don't you get it?" What is obvious to her but difficult to explain is that they're the same, but different.

That's how grief is for parents who lose an infant - the same as other bereaved parents, but different. The shock, disbelief, horror, anger is the same. The pain in the chest is the same. The void is the same. The ache and longing and despair hurt just as much, for just as long. The *difference* is nobody believes any of that.

When Nicholas was diagnosed (shortly after birth) with a heart defect, he was given only a short time to live. We wanted to bring him home from the hospital, and we met some resistance from family and friends.

Many thought that bringing Nicholas home was a *terrible* idea. "Oh my, you'll get attached to him, and it will be much harder on you when he dies," was the common thread of their thoughts.

I don't know how they thought we had avoided attachment to this point - he was our *child*, he looked just like our other children, he was our *son!* (Can you envision a world where people have to be talked into taking their new baby home? "Don't worry, you'll like him once you get him home and get attached to him.")

Do people honestly think you can carry a child through pregnancy (to whatever stage the pregnancy ends), give birth to your child, hold him or her, and have no feelings about your child or yourselves as parents unless the child is alive & healthy.

When a baby is expected, we are told by everyone, including the media, that the birth of a baby is the most blessed of all life's events, that this new person, who is different from all persons ever born, will change our lives forever.

And yet when this most blessed and unique person *dies*, everybody acts like *it's nothing*. "Better luck next time." "It's better he died before you got to know him." "You'll have more babies."

These are some of the things that make grieving for an infant child complicated - different. There is no permission given to even feel *bad*, because "you can't have feelings for someone you didn't know."

So parents who lose a baby will generally try to hide their feelings of grief from others for fear of ridicule, disapproval or stern lectures about how lucky they are - to have other children or the *ability* to have new (and obviously improved) babies. On a tragedy scale, losing a baby ranks pretty low.

For people who will still say that it is "harder" to lose an older child, I say that these are people who are not currently pregnant or don't have an infant, and that they have forgotten. They've forgotten the excitement, anxiety, fear and ultimately the miracle of birth. They've forgotten the purity of love, the wonder and amazement at the first glimpse of this brand new person, and the vow that every parent makes at that moment: "I'll never let anyone or anything hurt you - ever!" Let them hold their own newborn in their arms once again, and they would remember.

Do I wish Nicholas died at birth instead of living six weeks? Of course not. It simply defies logic to think that any parent would want *less time* with their child instead of more.

People will say that grief over the death of an infant is nothing more than the loss of hopes and dreams for the future. That is certainly a part of it, as it is for any bereaved parent. (The fact that my brother lived 49 years doesn't stop my mother from wishing to see him with his grandchildren.)

But we also miss that unique individual who was our first-born or second child, or only daughter or whatever. Even if I'd had another baby, Nicholas would still be my only child starting Kindergarten this year. He was his own person with his own place in our family.

When we speak of the death of a child, age *has* no place in the discussion of grief. Don't you get it? It's the *same*.

*Linda Moffatt, BPUSA, St Louis, MO*

# Sibling Page

## How Does It Feel? What's It Like?

It's like:

A hole with no bottom  
 A hill with no top  
 A road with no bend  
 A night with no end  
 It's as if it's not happened  
 It's as if it's not true  
 It's as if it's a dream  
 Yet a numbness seeps through  
 There's a feeling of emptiness  
 A gap to be filled  
 There's a feeling of loneliness  
 That cannot be stilled  
 They say times a healer  
 How long will it take?  
 I can't see it ending  
 It's a permanent ache  
 Life has no meaning  
 Yet it has to go on  
 I find it so hard  
 There's a feeling of emptiness  
 There's a feeling of loneliness  
 To feel so alone  
 No one will ever know  
 The depths of my sorrow  
 I just have to trust  
 There'll be a better tomorrow  
 May God give me strength  
 To keep on going  
 To get through this pain to  
 Feel real again  
 I'll never get over it  
 Of that I am sure  
 And hope for a cure  
 Time's without end  
 Love is too  
 I'll never forget you  
 I'll always miss you

*Stella Kelly (after the death of her brother)  
 Submitted by Pat King TCF Seattle WA*

## Second

I used to be second to experience  
 what life has to offer.

Second to walk.

Second to lose my first tooth.  
 Second to learn how to ride a bike.

Second to learn how to drive.

Things started changing  
 after your death.

First to graduate.

First to go off to college.

First to turn nineteen.

I'm sick of being first.

I just want to be second.

*By Lisa Yoakum, sister of John*

## Ashley

When I think of Ashley, I think of all the good times. And some of the stupid little fights that we had. Maybe those fights used to feel dumb but now I miss them. I love and will always hang on to the good times.

My biggest fear is that I will forget her. If I don't think I'm going to remember, I dig out old memories. I think of her death sometimes as we're sledding down a hill, which is our life, and the sled is getting faster to the end of her life, or the bottom of the hill, but my sled isn't going as fast as hers. I know she can see me, but I can't see her. I hear her calling my name, but no words are coming out of my mouth to call her. This is how I sometimes feel.

*Hannah Childs, TCF NE Baltimore*

### Note:

*Siblings (age 16+) are welcome to attend our compassionate friends meetings.*

*Also The Compassionate Friends hosts a moderated chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings. To join go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on the "Find Support" tab.*



## 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.***

### 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 find and then choose online communities.

### Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

**TCF Quakertown** - 267-379-0429

**TCF Pocono** - 570-350-6695

**TCF Easton** - 610-577-5193

**GRASP** - 484-788-9440

(grief recovery after substance passing)

### Love Gift Form

*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 1st



Mail this form to:

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY  
C/O KATHLEEN COLLINS  
2971 PHEASANT DR.  
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

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

Address

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 are published in the next edition.*

**Special Text - Brief message & signature (Examples Messages - Happy Birthday; Loved & missed forever, Always in my heart Signatures - Love Mom, Dad etc )**

I would like my love gift to go toward: ( you may choose more than one)

Newsletter

Postage

Office Expenses

Special Events