



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 39 Issue 11

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November

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

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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 November 10
- Monday December 8
- Monday January 12

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

- by mail:
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The bereaved family has a difficult time, as the surviving members anticipate the coming holidays. There is a sense of the loss of the continual flow of traditions that not only bring Joy, as they reach back and hold hands with preceding generations, but thrust forward into the future through an Intact family, as well.

This is not to say there have not been losses in this family's tree before, but the normal, expected loss of a grandparent or parent is hard but different. Though some of the people of the past, who constituted the link from generation to generation, are no longer present, they did not leave before they touched hands with the younger ones and passed on the familiar ways we observe special days.

The bereaved family hurts because it feels the child, who was a large part of the future, is no longer there to contribute to the traditions of the family or impact on future generations. But is that really true? Perhaps the missing links of the past have influenced our lives more than we know. A large part of the way we observe special days just may be because changes were made generations back to accommodate the pain of the loss of one who died too young.

So, the loss of your child does not signify the loss of impact. Some day, down your family's road of life, the people connected to your chain will have included or excluded something in their observation of the holidays that you have added or subtracted because a child died.

It is good to remember that the people before you have survived their missing links and have passed on what you may have considered an unbroken chain. But, like yours, their chain was also flawed. There is strength still in the continuity of that lifeline. Hold tight to it and know that, like others before you, you too will survive and help to mend your family's links in their broken places. It will then be a stronger chain to which others, in the years ahead, will cling, as they seek that same sense of continuity.

*Mary Cleckley
TCF Atlanta, GA*

Our Children Remembered Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Christopher Brunner - Son of Cynthia Kern ; 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
Michael Geiger - Son of George & Patricia Geiger, Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Terrance, David, Timothy & The late Sgt. Christopher Geiger	Dec 31	Nov 9
Chelsie Graham - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
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 & Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Jacob Miller - Son of William R & Caroline P Miller	Nov 15	Nov 16
Marissa Monteverde - Daughter of Nadine Monteverde; Sister of Tanya & Jeremy	Jan 23	Nov 4
PJ Pfenning - Son of Maureen Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
Timothy Printz - Son of Matt & Claire Printz; Brother of Wendy, Micah, Calvin & David	Nov 6	Nov 6
Christine Rappleyes - Daughter of Wendy Meixell	Oct 12	Nov 20
Jason Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
Heidi Schlenzig - Daughter of Tom & Janice Byrne	Nov 9	Aug 7
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Leo Shiner - Grandson of Morris & 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 & 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	May 13
Emma Werner - Daughter of Samantha Behler; Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III	Dec 15	Nov 1
Christopher Williamson - Son of Chris & Kim Williamson; Brother of the late Christina Joy Williamson	Nov 12	Nov 12
Paul Woodling - Son of Gregg & Mary Ann Miller	Jul 21	Nov 5
Liam Young - Son of Thomas & Gabrielle Young; Brother of Nathan & Nora	May 13	Nov 14



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From: _____ Loved One _____

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| ♥ Pat Andrew | Jill Patricia Harris
<i>Happy Birthday Jill. Love and Miss You and Pops. Love, Mom, Jeff, Sam & Alex</i> |
| ♥ Betty Schuler | Dean Lynn Schuler
<i>Love You and Miss You So Much</i> |

What are Love Gifts?

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.

Some Thanksgiving Suggestions

Through our lives, expectations of things to come are based upon past experiences.

If in the past, you had set a glorious table and were the perfect host or hostess, it is very possible that friends and family will expect more of the same this year.

They may not be aware that you are not looking toward the holidays with a fun and games attitude.

They probably do not know that in anticipation of Thanksgiving, Chanukah, and Christmas, you may feel anxiety and fear.

They are probably thinking this year will be different and some sadness will accompany it, but I don't think they are aware of your anguish, especially if it has "been awhile."

I would suggest that in fairness to yourself you need to be honest about your feelings and, just as important, you need to communicate those feelings to those around you.

I really don't think it is necessary for you to believe that because you set a tradition and always made the turkey, fried the latkes, and always had the family over, that you need to feel obligated to do it all again this year. Perhaps you would like to tell everyone:

- * Someone else will have to make the dinner this year.
- * You want to make dinner in your home, but you need lots of help because you don't have the energy to do it alone.
- * You want to go to the parties but you are afraid you may break down and cry; you want them to know in advance that this is really okay.
- * You want to tell them it's okay to talk about your child - it won't make you uncomfortable.

The list goes on, but the point is that to pretend everything is "just fine" is a lie, and that's not fair to you or to the people who love you.

Diane Zamkoff, TCF Simi Valley, CA

November Morning

Memories rain down like falling leaves
Amidst a torrent of tears
Fall used to be my favorite
Now November brings only fear.

For October was the last full month
That we could share together.
My bright October full of joy
When again we heard your laughter..

Then darkness came November 8
Now there is only pain.
For when your gentle heart was stilled
We knew only loss and shame.



How could we lose our only son?
Our precious gift from God?
We miss you with an intense love
And grief is the road we plod.

Never will I feel the joy
That autumn used to bring
Although I smile at memories
Of you saying funny things.

Those days we spent are treasures;
How I wish for just one more!
So now, I'm waiting for the day
We meet on eternity's shore.

Sarah Chavez, TCF Greater Ozarks Chapter Springfield, MO

My message to those of you who are facing your first Thanksgiving since your child died is—don't feel guilty if you can find absolutely nothing for which to be thankful. Be very patient with yourself and face these trying days one at a time. I promise you that you really will reach a day when you will be able to offer thanks once again.

Marge Frankenberg, TCF, Arlington Heights, IL

For That, I Am Thankful

It doesn't seem to get any better ...
but it doesn't get any worse either.
For that, I am thankful.

There are no more pictures to be taken ...
but there are memories to be cherished.
For that, I am thankful.

There is a missing chair at the table ...
But the circle of family gathers close.
For that, I am thankful.

The turkey is smaller ...
but there is still stuffing.
For that, I am thankful.

The days are shorter ...
but the nights are softer.
For that, I am thankful.

The pain is still there ...
but it last only moments.
For that, I am thankful.

The calendar still turns,
The holidays still appear
And they still cost too much ...
but I am still here.
For that, I am thankful.

The room is still empty,
The soul still aches ...
but the heart remembers.
For that, I am thankful.

The guests still come,
The dishes pile up ...
but the dishwasher works.
For that, I am thankful.

The name is still missing,
The words still unspoken ...
But the silence is shared.
For that, I am thankful.

The snow still falls,
The sled still waits,
and the spirit still wants to ...
For that, I am thankful.

The stillness remains ...
but the sadness is smaller.
For that, I am thankful.

The moment is gone ...
but the love is forever.
For that, I am blessed,
For that, I am grateful ...

Love was once (and still is)
Apart of my being ...
For that, I am living.
I am LIVING ...
and for that, I am thankful.

May your holidays be filled
with reasons to be thankful.
Having loved and having been loved
is perhaps the most wondrous reason of all.

Darcie D. Sims

*Like a bird singing in the rain,
let grateful memories survive in time of sorrow*

Robert Lewis Stevenson

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



LEGACY OF A VETERAN

He walked upon earth with peace and freedom in his heart.
He smiled the smile of grace until from this earthly plane did part.
He left behind a solemn gift for the entire the world to know;
that the seeds of peace and freedom bloom, seeds he helped to sow.

He knew the agony and pain of war, in his body, mind and soul
and steadfastly resolved that love and honour must be told.
As his body succumbed to the need to pass from this mortal life,
a candle flickered softly, and exposed his gift of love to light.

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Rebuilding Your Life One Piece at a Time

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of putting the pieces back together is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect what was with what is and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This thinking is the work that grief demands; it is the creation of a new picture of your life created one piece at a time.

*Stephanie Elson
From the TCF blog*

One life, like the song,
strummed softly on the strings,
Makes music to the ears
of those who hear it sing.

Discordant notes and harmony,
together make the sounds,
But the space between the notes
is where the meaning may be found.

A life may be as brief
as a note on a page,
Or as long as a symphony
with all the movements played.

But long or short, the melody
has its meaning though unfinished
And for those with ears to hear it,
the meaning's not diminished.

Somewhere the song continues
its sweetly singing phrase,
The music is forever,
not just for those days.

One life, like a song,
strummed softly on the strings,
Makes music to the ears
of those who hear it sing.

Karen Howard, TCF Miami, FL

Sibling Page

Please Don't Overlook Me!

I know my size is smaller
my hands are littler
my legs are shorter,
but my HEART can hurt
just like yours.
I'm a CHILD
You're an adult...
Please don't overlook me!

I know my vocabulary isn't the greatest
my attention span lacks longevity
my logic sometimes seems irrational,
but my MIND can question
death just like yours can.
I'm a TEENAGER
You're an adult
Please don't overlook me!

I know my needs seem less important
my feelings seem less controlled
my actions are hard to understand,
but my BODY needs a hug
just like yours does.
I'm YOUNGER
You're older,
Please don't overlook me!

I know tears are hard to show,
fears are difficult to face,
death means not coming back,
but my SOUL searches for reassurance
just like yours does.
I'm HURTING
You're hurting too...
Please don't overlook me!

*TCF Sibling Page,
Carson City, NV*

From Siblings, For Siblings

Don't be afraid of showing your feelings.

If your parents keep saying things about your dead sibling like "he was too good for this world," don't take that to mean you are not as good because you are still here. Remember that parents don't expect to outlive their children and they are searching for a justification.

If your parents seem to be ignoring your needs, don't think they have forgotten you. They just have to have time to themselves to grieve. And, if you really need attention, try telling them in a calm way that would really appreciate it if they would take time to go with you to an event or look at something. Don't make accusations, though.

Don't keep waiting for things to return to "normal." Normal will be different now than it was before your brother's or sister's death. Try to understand that there is no "right" way to grieve. What you're going through is different from what your parents are going through, and all members of your family will grieve in different ways.

Know that life does get better. The pain will decrease in intensity, even though there will be small spells of it throughout your life. And memories that seem painful now and become precious.

*Betsy Burgereit,
staff writer, "Birmingham News"*

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 and click on the "Find Support" tab.



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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.

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 find and then choose online communities.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429

TCF Easton - 610-577-5193

TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695

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



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

Address

Phone

Mail this form to:

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2971 PHEASANT DR.
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

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