



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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



Volume 39 Issue 12

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**December**

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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**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 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

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**TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting - Sunday, Dec. 14** 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 7p.m. local time in memory of all children gone too soon.

### To Participate you may observe the event :

- **At home with family** - Gather with family and friends, light your remembrance candle at pm local time and keep them lit for 1 hour. You may want to include music or poetry or sit in quiet reflection.
- **Attend a local gathering** - Our chapter will not be holding an event. At present the 2 closest chapters holding an event are the Abington and Clarks Summit Chapters others may be added. You can visit TCF National's website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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.** Preregistration required. To join the virtual event visit TCF National website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org), scroll to the bottom of any page click on the link for the Worldwide Candle Lighting then click on Virtual Worldwide Candle Lighting. The next page that appears will allow you to choose the candle lighting for your time zone. You then will be taken to Zoom registration for your selected candle lighting. After you register you will receive details for the event via email.

### One Little Candle

*I lit a candle tonight, in honor of you, remembering your life and all the times we'd been through.*

*Such a small little light the candle made, until I realized how much in darkness it lit the way.*

*All the tears I've cried in all my grief and pain, what a garden they grew, watered in human rain.*

*I sometimes can't see beyond the moment, in hopeless despair But then your memory sustains me, in heartaches repair.*

*I can wait for the tomorrow, when my sorrows ease. Until then, I'll light this candle, and let my memories run free*

*Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta*



## 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>Hunter Bremmer</b> - Son of David Bremmer ; Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
<b>Christopher Crouthamel, Jr</b> - Son of Carla Monteverde; Brother of Leah, Stephen & Carli	Aug 10	Dec 28
<b>David DeLong</b> -Son of The Late Gene & Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong	Oct 23	Dec 7
<b>Connor Dugan</b> - Son of George and Holly Dugan	Jul 17	Dec 24
<b>Michael Geiger</b> - Son of George and Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Terrance, David, Timothy & The late Sgt. Christopher Geiger	Dec 31	Nov 9
<b>Heather Hawn</b> - Daughter of Mike and Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
<b>Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh</b> - Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh;	Dec 20	Apr 10
<b>Audrey King Koch</b> - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
<b>Joseph McDonald</b> - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
<b>Michael Muller</b> - Son of Marilyn Muller	Jun 15	Dec 2
<b>Cody Myers</b> - Son of Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
<b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James and Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
<b>Steven Seibert</b> - Son of Eva Seibert; Brother of Nick & Krista; Grandson of Eva	Jun 27	Dec 22
<b>Emma Werner</b> - Daughter of Samantha Behler; Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III	Dec 15	Nov 1



### Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:	Loved One
♥David Bremmer	<b>Hunter Bremmer</b> <i>Happy 45th Birthday! All my love, Dad</i>
♥Denise Myers, Travis, Crystal & Ben	<b>Cody David Alexander Myers</b> <i>Happy Birthday! We love and miss you!</i>
♥Nana & Pop-Pop Shiner	<b>Leo Shiner</b> <i>Love you bigger than space!!</i>
♥Mrs Linda J. Hollabaugh	<b>Richard "Rich" Lee Hollabaugh</b> <i>Beloved Son "Light of my life"</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.

*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*

## SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

### **Know when your holidays are**

Holidays are not just at Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas, or New Year's.

Holidays are those times when family and friends get together for fun. It may or may not be associated with one of the traditional days of celebration.

Mark on your calendar the months during which your family's holidays occur.

Begin early to plan your coping strategies.

### **Be intentional about how you plan your holiday. Together, as a family, examine the events and tasks of the celebration and ask the following questions:**

Do we really enjoy doing this? Is it done out of habit, free choice, or obligation?

Is this a task that can be shared?

WOULD THE HOLIDAY BE THE SAME WITHOUT IT?

### **Decide what you can handle comfortably.**

Whether we are open to talk about our child.

Whether we feel able to send holiday cards this year.

Whether we can handle the responsibility of the family dinner, holiday parties, etc. or if we wish someone else to take over some of these traditions this year.

Whether we will stay at home for the holidays or choose a different environment.

Shopping is definitely easier if you make the entire list out ahead of time. Then when one of the "good days" comes along, you can get your shopping done quickly and with less confusion. Shopping by phone or from catalogs can also help.

### **Don't be afraid to make changes. It can really make things less painful.**

Let the children take over decorating the tree or invite friends in to help.

Open presents the night before the holiday instead of in the morning.

Have dinner at a different time. Change the seating arrangement.

Buy a special candle to quietly include your absent son or daughter.

### **Our greatest comfort may come in doing something for others.**

Giving a gift in memory of our child to a meaningful charity.

Adopting a needy family for the holidays.

Inviting a guest (foreign student, senior citizen, someone who would otherwise be alone) to share the festivities.

### **Evaluate your coping plans.**

Do your plans isolate you from those who love and support you best?

Do your plans allow for meaningful expression and celebration of what the particular holiday means for you?

### **Let your plans and limits be known.**

Write or phone family and friends to let them know of any intended changes.

Share with friends and family how you plan to approach the holiday and how they can best help you.

### **Don't be afraid to have fun.**

Enjoyment, laughter, and pleasure are not experiences in which you abandon your lost child. You have not forgotten him/her. Your child would not want you to be forever sad; you need not feel guilty over any enjoyment you may experience.

Give yourself and members of your family permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holiday.

### **Finally, as you seek to Make sensible plans, remember to make them firm enough to support you, but flexible enough to leave you some freedom. Most important, take time in your plans for three things:**

Take time to pray — it is the key to the greatest power on earth.

Take time to worship — it is the road to reverence and washes the dust of earth from our eyes.

Take time to love and let yourself be loved — for this is the real gift of the holiday season.

## Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us. But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together and to our present relationship.

Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me. When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I'll hear his voice: "Pay attention, Mom." (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive.

May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the reestablishing of your life.

*Catharine (Kitty) Reeve,  
TCF Mann and San Francisco Chapters, CA  
In memory of my son, Philip. Reprinted with permission*

## Coming Unwrapped

We wrap ourselves for the holidays much like the presents we give. The brightly colored paper hides what's within. When people look at us they only see the outside. We promise ourselves we will not come unwrapped. We'll make it through the family celebrations, the church services, and the big occasions. The paper and the ribbon will remain intact.

But, it is the small thing that manages to untie the bow. The little insignificant moment, the Christmas parade, the search for the tree, the discovered ornament, the special carol, the memory, and the paper gets wrenched off. The true Christmas presence shows itself. The inevitable tide of feelings bursts out of the artificially decorated facade. The emotions pour out. The intense anger wells up. The tears are shed as the holidays come. These are as sure as the tides of the sea and the march of time. Only a compassionate friend, a bereaved parent, knows of what I speak.

Yet the answer isn't in fighting or in denying these feelings. We have paid the price. We have the right to grieve. The resolution of our grief is in grieving. Our hope for all who read this letter is that you will make it through the holidays. We cannot make the pain go away. But know there are others who suffer with you. We have made it and together will continue on.

*Hank Hewett TCF, Scranton, PA*

**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...**

*Exxon Buckley TCF, Livonia, MI*



## Amid the Bustle

Amid the bustle  
And the holiday cheer  
With Thanksgiving gone  
And Christmas soon here  
While cookies are baking  
And the vacuum is humming  
As I get ready

For the company that's coming.  
And amid the paper so shiny  
And the tinsel and glitz,  
While I lovingly wrap presents  
For my loved one and friends.  
While I frantically shop  
For that one special gift  
That will bring Mom a smile,  
And almost certainly a kiss.  
And when Santa's list is  
finished,

And the kids are in bed,  
While Dad trims the tree,  
And I make the bread.  
The toys are assembled,  
And the stockings are stuffed,  
The turkey is in the oven,  
And we've finally done enough.

When the preparation is over,  
For the day that lies ahead,  
I think of what has been lost,  
And the blessings that remain.  
I miss those who have gone,  
And can never be again.  
Though thankful for family still  
here,  
It is for you I shed a holiday  
tear.



*Lisa Sculley  
Jacksonville, FL*

## Holiday Reflections

Christmas and Hanukkah are upon us once more. December is an emotionally laden month for most adults. We pause and ponder the meaning of "Peace on Earth, goodwill toward man." We overflow with nostalgia for holidays past. We touch base with our beliefs, rituals, traditions and treasured memories. In passing on this heritage to our children, we are like conduits connecting past, present and future.

It is a bit of immortality, a sense of tradition flowing from generation to generation. It is this very essence of the holidays that stabs at the heart of bereaved parents. Our children represent the future. We may wonder what is the point of tradition with so many pieces of the future dead. Each grieving parent must struggle to answer that question effectively in order to establish a framework for the holiday season. Since we cannot ignore it or make it go away we can deal with the situation by making specific plans with our families. We can assess priorities. We can "make" changes. We can decide which traditions to uphold and which to set aside this year. We can choose to acknowledge openly to our children and our grief. We can think about some very special gifts.

To ourselves we can grant the gift of acceptance by realizing that our grief is a necessary healing process. To our families we can extend the gift of empathy by remembering that they, too, hurt. To our missing children we can bestow the gift of homage by determining to work through grief so that we may live life to the fullest.

*Candy McLaughlin,  
TCF, Minne,MN*

## Handling Friends and Relatives

Relatives and friends can be very uncomfortable with your grief, and, therefore, may try to persuade you to do things for which you are not ready. They may tell you that you should feel better or that you shouldn't talk about it. Only you know what is good for you; consequently, you should do only what you find comfortable, even if it means not seeing some people for a while.

Other people may have set a timetable on how long your grief should last. Coping with the death of a child takes years, not weeks or months, and, unless you have had a child die, it's impossible to understand. Stick up for yourself; it is difficult when you are not sure of anything. You know how you feel, so don't let anyone tell you how to act, think, or feel.

Tell your relatives and friends what you want them to do. If you want to be remembered at anniversaries and holidays and they are remiss, let them know how it makes you feel. Also, share with them that you want your child to be mentioned in conversations. You may cry, but let them know it is normal and they are not the cause of your crying. Let them know it is better for you to cry than for them not to mention your child, which would cause you to grieve silently.

*~ALIVE ALONE,  
TCF/Western Australia*

# Sibling Page

## A Holiday To-Do List:

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bitter - sweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst.

At any rate, I can handle November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and put it under your tree if you have one.
5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of.

This can be very therapeutic.

6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go - the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!
7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.
8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH—it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.
9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.
10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

*Amy Baker Ferry*

*TCF, Heart of Florida Chapter,*



### 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 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

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