



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



May

Volume 39 Issue 5

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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.

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 May 12
- Monday June 9
- Monday July 14

Meeting Cancellations

Cancellations will be posted on the webpage.

Those on the meeting text list will be notified via text.

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

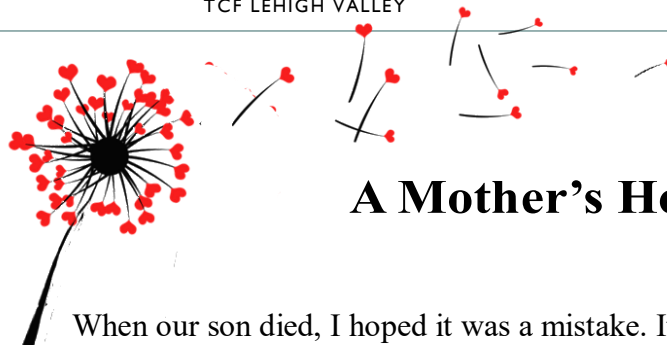
If you move please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

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A Mother's Hope

When our son died, I hoped it was a mistake. It was not. I hoped it was a dream. It was not.

Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinner time with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook, I did not shop for food, I did not eat. I hoped he would come back. He did not. I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not. I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives. I hoped for acceptance. I found none. I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not. How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?

I hoped for peace. I had none. I hoped for sleep. I had none. I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of my control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew our life would never be the same again. I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not. I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not. I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not. I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving children that I knew they deserved. I could not know how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give. I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead. I hoped the feelings that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying. At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, "How long will I feel like this?" He did not. I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at my second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter in law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered

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

May Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Patricia Arey - Daughter of Elizabeth & the late William Arey ; Sister of Elizabeth Ann, Barbara, Rose Marie & Elaine	Apr 18	May 8
Gabriel Benner - Son of Baily Benner	May 4	Feb 9
Jacob Campbell - Son of Maynard & Janis Campbell	May 25	May 24
Edwin Frantz - Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Troy T. Kidd, Jr	Aug 11	May 24
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl & Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
David Heard - Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	May 20	Feb 10
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark & Kathleen Kilker ; Sister of Meghan, Bridget & Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
David Kunsman - Son of Charles & Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
Cody Myers - Son of Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal & Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Eric Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Feb 15	May 20
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Jonelle Sisonick - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
Shane Uttard - Son of Brenda Deubler	Jan 15	May 13
Gilbert Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	May 13
Liam Young - Son of Thomas & Gabrielle Young; Brother of Nathan & Nora	May 13	Nov 14



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥ Kathleen Kilker

Colleen Kilker
Love, Mom, Dad, Meghan, Bridget & Mark

♥ Betty Schuler

Dean Lynn Schuler
Love and Miss You Everyday

♥ Elizabeth Arey

Patricia Arey
Gone too soon, Forever in my heart, Mother

About 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

Memories are like threads of gold, They never tarnish or grow old.

Continued from page 2

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have. When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again. But there is joy. When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. But I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I do not cry as often. So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Oh, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium. I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him will never change.

My hope as a Mother is that we all will find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.

By Betty Lineberger, Ocala, FL., Bereaved Parents USA,
Marion County FL Chapter. Reprinted from BP USA
Oct/Nov/Dec 2004 Newsletter

A Mother's Thoughts

Yesterday...

We dreamed of how our future would be,
Of times we'd share, my child and me.
Whether joy or pain, laughter or tears,
We'd stand together throughout the years.

Today...

My heart sobs with uncontrollable grief.
I search for answers, but find no relief.
The skies have darkened, no longer bright,
For my child is gone, forever from sight.
The dreams we shared never can be,
They're left to linger in my memory.

Tomorrow...

My heart will push aside this cloud
That darkens my life like a heavy shroud.
Once again I'll see the dawning light
And know my child's love still burns bright.
I'll remember the moments we both shared;
I'll remember our love and how we cared.
I'll remember my child now lives in me,
And her YESTERDAYS shall always be.

Carol Cichella, TCF Rockford, IL



*"A mother holds her children's
hands for just a little while.
But she holds their hearts forever"*

Betty Stenlake

How to Handle Mother's Day

Special days of any kind can be especially difficult for anyone who has lost a child. The first year following the loss of a child is often filled with days of dread and fear when anniversary dates and holidays approach. Mother's Day is a holiday that is one of the most dreaded holidays of all. A mother grieving the loss of her precious child oft spends weeks in fearful waiting of the day, wondering how she will ever make it through.

There is no real way of avoiding Mother's Day. The stores are filled with gifts made and designed especially for mothers and children. Advertisements for gifts on the radio and in the newspaper bombard us every day for weeks prior to Mother's Day. Card and flower shops experience their busiest season of the year on Mother's Day. Reminders of this special holiday are everywhere!

The pain of facing Mother's Day without a child can be the most lonely pain a mother will ever know. There is an empty ache that becomes increasingly more evident as the day approaches, and there seems to be no way to find relief. It is wise to share these feelings with other members and friends rather than to avoid the topic. By sharing how you feel, you can alert others to be more sensitive to your needs during this painful day of sad reminders.

*Sit down with your family and discuss what you would like to do for Mother's Day.

*Remember that this is not a time to worry about hurting other's feelings, but rather a time to make your wishes known.

*Remind yourself often that there is no right or wrong way to handle Mother's Day.

*Some mothers have found it helpful to go away on a mini weekend trip, totally avoiding any church service, special meals, or family gatherings that will be too painful to attend. Other mothers choose to do something special in memory of their child such as take a walk to a quiet place, read a special poem, and then release a balloon in memory of their child. The actual releasing of the balloon is known to give mothers a sense of letting go that is quite healing.

*Many choose to use Mother's Day as a special day to plant a flower or a tree in memory of their child who has died. Seeing something growing is often a visible reminder of the ongoing love a moth-

er has for her child. Whatever you choose to do, remember not to set expectations too high for the day.

*Plan to do something that is healing for you, but realize that you will still experience a wide gamut of emotions, and many tears will fall. Because grief is exhausting mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, be sure to eat nutritious food for the day, hydrate yourself with lots of fluids, and allow yourself time to rest and be replenished. Grief work is the hardest work you will ever do! By planning ahead for Mother's Day, you have already crossed a big hurdle in your walk through child loss.

*Telling others that this is going to be a difficult day for you is a way of building up a support system that will help you get through the day. Remind yourself often that you will make it through Mother's Day, and when you do, you will be one step farther along in this difficult journey we call grief.

By Clara Hinton, Author of Silent Grief

Memorial Day

For each grave
Where a soldier lies
At his rest

For each prayer
That is said today
Out of love

For each sigh
Of remembering
Someone who died

Let us also give thought to
The mothers and fathers
The brothers and sisters
The friends and the lovers
Whom death left behind.

Sascha



Love Never Goes Away!

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouchies" can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable some day. TIME the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child: the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don't have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse. So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief, it only becomes tolerable and livable. Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child...HE [SHE] DIED. We don't lose the love that flowed between it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!



*Darcie Sims, PhD., CHT, CT, GMS,
TCF Enid OK Chapter*

The Scar

To lose a loved one
is to be wounded deep within the soul

The wound will heal,
but the scar will remain.

The scar is not upon the body
but upon the heart.

To touch the scar is
to recall the image of the loved one.

To touch the scar is to experience the
love that still remains in him
and is eternally sheltered in you.

Jim Rosemary, TCF Huntington, WV

A Trip Down Memory Lane

I try to find a quiet place,
That's far from trouble and strife.
Where I can put together all the
troubles of my life.

It's there I think of Buddy,
Just he and I alone.
And where I find the peace I crave
Now that you are gone.

I try not to fear the troubles,
I face from day to day.
For in this quiet place I found,
I'm learning how to pray.

Miss you, And Love you
Forever in my heart. Your Nana.

Loretta Ross, TCF Lehigh Valley, PA

*Time does not erase what
the heart remembers*

Sibling Page

Thoughts for Siblings on Mothers Day

Mother's Day is sure to be a stressful time for a bereaved mom. Even when remaining children in the family gather to make their mother happy and to show her how purposeful her life is to them. Mother's Day is almost certain to be lonely for any bereaved mother.

If your mother doesn't seem as responsive that day, you sons and daughters, give your hugs and kisses anyway. She loves you, too. Remember that she's also the mother of a child no longer here...your brother or sister.. and she misses your sibling as much as you do.

*Excerpted from "One Women's Opinion"
by Shirley Ottman*

To Those Who Come After

I never knew my brother,
Yet I know him well;
Through my mother's eyes
I've known him, and I love him still.
I'll grow tall and strong like him,
Yet not like him at all.
He'll be my guardian angel, and we'll
Grow through life together, as one.
I have his clothes and his toys and his photos.
I hold them dear to me. But most of all,
I treasure loving memories,
The memories my mother gave to me.

Karen Hoyland, TCF, Brisbane, Australia

A Scar That Just Won't Heal

The room you once lived in...
Doesn't look the same.
The people who used to call you,
Never mention your name.
The car you used to drive,
They may not be made anymore;
All the things you once treasured,
Are boxed behind closet doors.

The clothes you set the trends by,
Are surely out of date.
The people you owned money to
Have wiped away the slate.
Things have changed and
Changed again since you went away.
But some things have
Remained the same, each and
Every day.

Like this aching in my heart,
A scar that just won't heal.
Or the way a special song
Can change the way I feel.
Brother, you must know that
The music bonds us and will
Always keep us close.
Because secretly I know deep in
My heart, it's the music you miss
The most.

So let the world keep on turning
And time can take it toll.
For as long as the music keeps
Playing, you'll be alive
And dancing in my soul.

Stacie Gilliam, TCF/Oklahoma City, OK

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 - 610-515-3526

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