



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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June

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 June 9
- Monday July 14
- Monday August 11

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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• by mail:

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Inside this issue:

Article - Father's Day.. Grieving Dads.. Emotions	2 - 4
Our Children Remembered	3
Love Gifts	3
Poem - Fathers Day	4
Article - Bread Crumbs...Finding Our Way Back	5 - 6
Poems - Lost Graduation; A Love Song	6
<u>Sibling Page</u>	7
Article - You Don't Answer Poems - I heard My Father Cry;	
Love Gift Form	8

Father's Day.. Grieving Dads.. Emotions



This is for the dads out there on Father's Day who have ever had the unfortunate task of burying a child. I see all of you and your pain because I am one of you. I am a member of this brotherhood of guys just trying to survive the loss of our child. Some of you will experience Father's Day without your child for the first time and others know this day all too well.

It's a day that can create all sorts of emotions depending on the person. Here are some of the emotions I feel on this day:

Sadness: I miss Katie and Noah every day and Father's Day is no different. Although most days people wouldn't recognize the great sadness I carry with me, it is still there. I just disguise it better than I did early in my grief. Mainly because it doesn't consume me like it used to. But there is no doubt, it is still there. **Loneliness:** I often feel this way because I have no living children. I have two bronze urns and that just doesn't cut it for me. My wife and I are fortunate enough to live a life that provides all the necessities we need to feel safe and comfortable. However, it often feels empty and lonely. The thought of losing my wife as we get older scares me since we've come to rely on each other so much. We "get" each other because we helped each other "survive" the aftermath of losing Katie and Noah. "Survive" is relative since we both still struggle with the fallout of such losses from time to time.

Happiness: To some, this may sound odd, but it's true. I am so happy to be their dad. So happy to have known them if only for a moment in time. As painful as their deaths have been, I wouldn't change the fact that I am their dad.

Pride: I am very proud to be their dad. Thinking about them puts a smile on my face. A smile filled with pride and warmth for them. A smile that hides a lot of pain but holds on to the hope of holding Katie and Noah in my arms someday.

I am sure I could write on and on about the different emotions I feel, but I picked the words that are most prevalent in my life right now. That doesn't mean it won't change at some point as they have over the years.

I know many of you will feel alone on Father's Day, but you are not. There are hundreds of thousands of grieving dads out there who are fighting to regain some normalcy in their life again. As I've said many times before, there is no going back to the old you. It's a futile attempt. One's energy is better served finding the new you. Energy filled with love for your child and one consumed with doing everything they

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
John Fry - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl & Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
Jill Harris - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
Troy Kidd, Jr. - Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Edwin Frantz	Sep 6	Jun 4
Audrey King Koch - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
Faith Kleppinger - Daughter of Barbara Kleppinger & The Late John Kleppinger ; Sister of Susan Schilling & Jill Kleppinger	Jun 8	Jun 15
Zaine Krluc - Son of Ramiz & Merima Krluc	Apr 10	Jun 12
Michael Milot - Son of John & Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
Michael Muller - Son of Marilyn Muller	Jun 15	Dec 2
Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
Konnor Roy - Son of Dale & Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
Steven Seibert - Son of Eva Seibert; Grandson of Eva; Brother of Nick & Krista	Jun 27	Dec 22
Emmanuel Trotter - Son of Tonya Trotter	Jun 23	Jan 17
Craig Yurick - Son of Robert & Sharon Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥Pat Andrew

Jill Patricia Harris

We love and miss you and Pops

♥Lucille V Radocha

Peter A. Radocha

Happy Birthday!! We all love you and speak to you often.

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

*The love of a parent is not contingent on how much time we had with
our child. Love simply cannot be measured in time.*

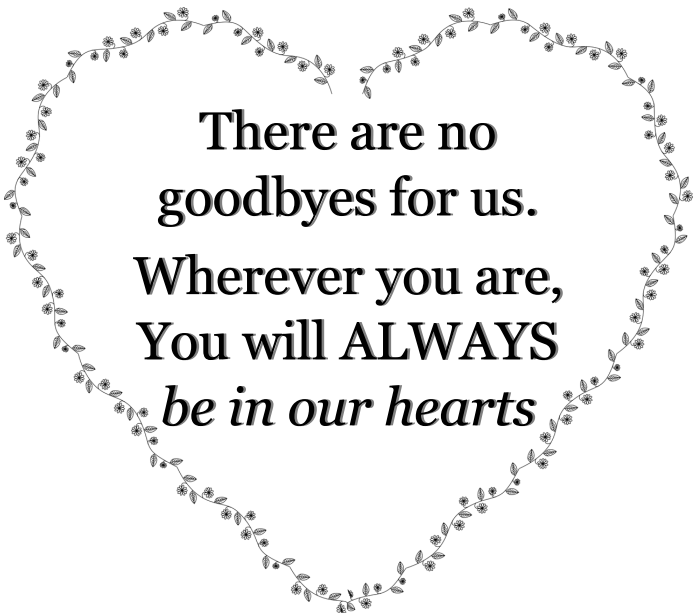
Joanne Cacciatore

Continued from page 2

can to honor that child. I strive everyday to make my kids proud of their days. Some days I'm successful and some days I am not. But I keep trying; it's what keeps me from throwing in the towel.

I want all grieving dads out there to know that regardless of their child's age when they died, you are still their dad and you LOVE them. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding their death, you are still their dad and you LOVE them. Regardless of when their death occurred, you are still their dad and you LOVE them. Unconditionally. You love them. Find a way to celebrate that love and your child this Father's Day.

*Kelly Farley,
Unknown Chapter*



**There are no
goodbyes for us.
Wherever you are,
You will ALWAYS
be in our hearts**

Fathers Day

Years have come and gone and time has surely drifted by.
I've searched for any answer, yet I'm left to wonder why.
The only thing I know for sure, through the happy and the sad.
No matter what the circumstance, I will always be your dad.

Not a day goes by that I don't hold you in my heart.
My love reaches far beyond this space we are apart.
These empty arms remember all the good times that we had.
I may be standing here alone, but I will always be your dad.

Some won't understand, so I don't bother to explain.
They look into my eyes, but they can only see the pain.
Afraid to look too deep as they are blinded by the fear,
If only they could know, a father's love won't disappear.

So when this road gets lonely and the journey seems too hard,
And I get to feeling sorry that I didn't get a card.
If I close my eyes I can almost hear you say.
"I love you and I miss you, daddy....Happy Fathers Day."

*Alan Pedersen
Alan is an award-winning speaker, songwriter, recording artist and
former president of The Compassionate Friends, USA*

Bread Crumbs Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have.

They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice - a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideals and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest - to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them. I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow doesn't come."

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently and I believe better than the person that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the "perfect life" or do what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of "what's in it for me?" to "how can I help you?" We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We didn't ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: "Could you please go over?" We know we can and will, if only to listen

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?" his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy who broke his bike," the child answered. "But, Honey," the mother said. "You don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know Mom," came the reply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "there is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in Stage Two we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

Rich Edler, In Memory of my son, Mark

Rich and his wife Kitty are founding members of the South Bay/LA Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Son Mark died in 1992 and Rich's first book "If I Knew Then What I Know Now" is dedicated to him. His following book, "Into the Valley and Out Again" is the story of a father's grief after the loss of his son and the changes in priorities and approaches to life that follow." Rich served on TCF's National Board of Directors for several years as has his wife, Kitty. He died in February of 2002.

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LOST GRADUATION

Pomp and Circumstance,
Speeches,
Happy faces,
Proud parents,
It's just not fair
Because you're not there.
School song playing,
Gifts,
Celebrations,
Laughing friends,
We cannot share
Because you're not there
Mortar boards flying,
Diplomas,
Tassels tossed,
Teachers smiling,
It's too much to bear
Because you're not there.

Sue Snapp, Tucson, AZ TCF

*Dedicated to the children who graduated only in
our hearts*

A LOVE SONG

*The mention of my child's name, may
bring tears to my eyes
But it never fails to bring,
music to my ears.*

*If you are really my friend, Let me
hear the beautiful music of his name.
It soothes my broken heart*

Nancy Williams,
TCF/ New Jersey



Sibling Page

You Don't Answer

I remember when we were kids, we'd play that game where you were supposed to stay hidden. But when I couldn't find you, it was the end of the game, And you'd always answer when I called your name. At the cemetery it's peaceful and I can be alone. There your memory breaks this heart of stone. For in my heart lies the tears and the pain, Because you don't answer when I call your name.

Erin Hall TCF, Northern Virginia In Memory of Her Sister, Elaina Ranel

I Heard My Father Cry

Feeling so helpless and sad
Listening from the room next door
Over my ears using every pillow I had
I couldn't take it anymore

His pain came from deep inside
Cries turned into screams
What he felt he could no longer hide
The loss of his only son
took away his dreams

His sighs echoed off the walls
He couldn't seem to pull himself together
As our eyes met at the end of the hall
I realized this hurt will be with him forever

With eyes so sad, he looked
right through me
Not knowing what to say, I didn't even try
This is something I never expected to see
But now I know that real men do cry

Karen Keck

TCF Sacramento Valley Chapter Newsletter

20 Questions

It is smaller than a breadbox. It is larger than a car.

It is rain bowed, striped, and polka-dotted but colorless by far.

Its memory's like an elephant. It's forgetful as a fish.

It's emotional as a postcard and hopeful as a wish.

It is busy as an ant. It is lazy as a bee.

It is weak as flavored gelatin but hardy as a snow-pea.

It's hated as a jelly fish. It's loved as family.

It's plain as a doughnut yet hidden as your keys.

It is ordinary as paper. It is creative as a kid.

It is loose as a shoe and stuck as a lid.

It is Grief.

It is Love.

It is Hope.

Jacqui McPeck TCF of Spokane, WA In Memory of

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