



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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



Volume 39 Issue 8

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**August**

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 August 11
- Monday September 8
- Monday October 13

*Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the webpage and 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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## Good Old Summertime??????

The good old summertime has arrived. The time when we usually plan vacations, family reunions, picnics, etc. There are many activities going on, such as ball games, golf, swimming, though for some of us a float trip on an Ozark stream is more enticing. Vacation Bible Schools and ice cream socials are held at churches. We usually adopt a more casual lifestyle, cook outdoors, and free ourselves of rigid schedules. Whatever our interests may be, this is the time for family togetherness. When our family is still intact it can be a wonderful time. If not, it can be a very painful time.

If this is the first summer following the death of your child, you may not have much inclination or energy for the usual activities, although many parents find that doing something physically demanding helps release the tension and anger associated with grief. Some have found a measure of healing and peace working in their yard or garden, or planting a flower garden in memory of their child. Others may feel obligated to attend family activities, and then they find that it does help to get involved.

If you don't feel able to get out and get involved in your usual activities, don't be concerned, just do what you feel like you can do now. Most of us think going away on a vacation or short trip somewhere will help us get away from the painful reminders of our child's death, and though it may be less painful than it was at home, we soon learn that we take our memories and emotions with us wherever we go. However, a vacation can be an incentive for doing something relaxing and enjoyable, though most of us feel guilty if we enjoy ourselves very soon after our child has died.

When we made vacation plans for the summer following our son's death in February, I was a little apprehensive. We were going to visit our daughter, who had recently moved to Michigan, and invited our daughter-in-law (our son's widow) and her daughters, ages three and five, to accompany us on the vacation. From there, all our group traveled upstate to stay a few days at a lake resort.

Our little granddaughters kept the trip upbeat and lively, and we were able to enjoy ourselves for the first time that summer. It was helpful for all of us, even though there were several intense emotional moments. Now we realize that everyone in our family was still grieving, each in their own way, and it would have been helpful to have allowed each one some private time to rest every day.

As newly bereaved parents, we are like pioneers, charting our way through an unknown area to our new destination. We've been told that it is peaceful there, but we can't feel that peace until we arrive. Those who have already made the trip report that life is different, yet good, in that new place. But we find that difficult to believe, because we are still traveling that long, rugged trail, and the end is not yet in sight. "Don't be afraid," we are told, "we made it, and you will make it too. Just take your time, and you will find your way." Those who have made the journey encourage us

## 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>Christopher Crouthamel, Jr</b> - Son of Carla Monteverde ; Son of Carla Monteverde; Brother of Leah, Stephen & Carli	Aug 10	Dec 28
<b>Hope Davidson</b> - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Aug 8	Feb 8
<b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
<b>Brenda Fehr Hatrak</b> - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr, Sr.; Sister of Barbara R. Burgin & David A. Fehr, Jr.; Granddaughter of Elwood & Mary Mann and Warren & Rose Fehr	Aug 31	Jan 8
<b>Edwin Frantz</b> - Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Troy T. Kidd, Jr	Aug 11	May 24
<b>Eric Graver</b> - Son of Mary L Graver	Aug 17	Jul 9
<b>Matt Kush</b> - Son of Rick & Ann Kush; Brother of Mike & Jenn	Aug 24	Feb 10
<b>Michael Leh</b> - Son of Jeneane Leh; Brother of Dayna & Samantha Leh	Nov 11	Aug 19
<b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
<b>Carter Mayer</b> - Son of Ashley Mowrey	Jul 13	Aug 20
<b>Benjamin Miller</b> - Son of Brian & Caitlin Miller	Aug 5	Jan 11
<b>Jim Minter</b> - Brother of Jeanine Minter	Aug 15	Mar 14
<b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
<b>James Ralls</b> - Son of Tina Ralls; Brother of Timothy & Geoffrey	Jan 2	Aug 17
<b>Jason Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
<b>Heidi Schlenzig</b> - Daughter of Tom & Janice Byrne	Nov 9	Aug 7
<b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
<b>Elliot Senseman</b> - Son of Heather Lyons	Aug 17	Jul 27
<b>Anthony Sisonick</b> - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
<b>Jonelle Sisonick</b> - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
<b>Benjamin Steinert</b> - Son of MaryAnne Steinert	Aug 1	Apr 9
<b>Zackary Stokes</b> - Son of Pam & Duane Stokes	Aug 8	Jul 2
<b>Michael Szabo</b> - Son of John & Maria Szabo, Jr	Aug 2	Aug 17
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Jonathan Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Aug 20	Jan 22
<b>Christina Williamson</b> - Daughter of Chris & Kim Williamson; Sister of the late Christopher Jayden Williamson		Aug 6
<b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael & Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22
<b>Hunter Yeagle</b> - Son of Terree & Brett Oakwood	Aug 1	Sep 6
<b>Craig Yurick</b> - Son of Sharon Yurick & The Late Robert Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21



## Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



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

♥ Wayne & Rebecca Ortelli     **Amy Beth Ortelli**

*Always in our hearts and on our minds. Love, Mom & Dad*

**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**

to believe that we'll make it through the wilderness of grief and find peace.

As one who has found peace at the end of the journey, I'm thankful to those who encouraged me during those dark days when I could not see the way. Their loving support, and my faith, gave me hope that life could be good and meaningful again, and now it truly is. If you are still struggling along, unable to see a future without pain and confusion, please reach out to those of us who have been there.

We are here to take your hand and help you find the way to healing. Be kind to yourself and others, and take time to relax and remember. Your child would want you to try to find some ways to enjoy life once again, without feeling guilty. This summer you may find the road to renewed hope and recovery.

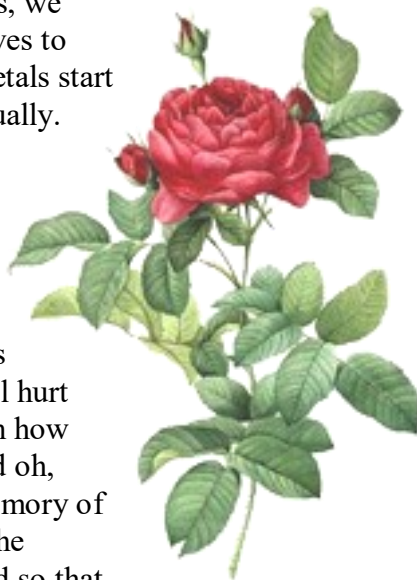
*Lenora Sanders*

*Lovingly lifted from the TCF Livonia, newsletter*

## Memories

When a child dies our memories are held tightly with lots of pain, just like the tightly folded petals of the rose bud with the many thorns to stick and prick causing pain. As we talk about our child and share memories with others, we begin to open ourselves to healing as the rose petals start to open ever so gradually.

Just as a rose becomes more beautiful as it blossoms, so do the memories of our child! Yes, the thorns are still there and will hurt when touched, but oh how beautiful the rose and oh, how beautiful the memory of our children! Share the memory of your child so that memory can start to bloom to become as beautiful as a rose.



*Julie Timmerman,  
TCF, Tulsa, OK*

## *A Message From My Child*

*Touch A leaf, feel the wind  
Watch the grass grow green again  
Sunsets full of orange and pink  
I'm nearer than you think*

*Giant Clouds float in the sky,  
Birds laze in the air so high.  
Deer by ponds pause for a drink,  
I'm nearer than you think.*

*Lightning flashes in a storm,  
Winds blow cold and then they're warm.  
Piles of fluffy, purest snow.  
I'm nearer than you think.*

*God's strongest in the outdoor scene,  
Mountains high, majestic streams.  
I'm of His kingdom so it's true,  
I'm nearer than you think.*

*So take a walk and keep it slow.  
Watch God's creatures as you go.  
That squirrel that plays, the owl so wise,  
May be my spirit in disguise.*

*That rabbit that should run in fear,  
But 'stead walks up and sits so near,  
May be me in a different form  
Than the human robe that I once wore.*

*And standing on a distant hill,  
And though the air has become so still,  
A breeze comes so quick out of the blue.  
It's only me caressing you.*

*It's my existence that has changed.  
I'm of sun and of the rain.  
It's God's world now that I'm a part of,  
But I can touch you through His love.*

*So contemplate God's greatest prize,  
The beauty there before your eyes.  
Take heart. Don't let your spirits sink.  
I'm nearer than you think.*

*Linda Shearer, TCF, Miami Valley Chapter*



## How many children do you have?

Shortly after my son died, I realized that this question was going to be bothersome. Each time someone asked me about the number of children, I struggled with the answer. I soon decided I was not going to let this become a problem. I thought about how I felt about my choices of answers and chose the one that met my needs in the beginning. I had a surviving daughter, but I knew for me to say "one" would seem denial on my part that my son had lived, and that wasn't right for me.

In the beginning, when I still needed to tell people that my son had died, I would tell in detail about his accident when the question about how many children came my way. As the months passed and I had told the story enough times, I found that it wasn't necessary to go into detail anymore. My needs had changed, and I rethought my answer.

Now, when I am asked how many children I have, I answer, I had two children." The criteria I use in determining if I go any further is whether the person asking is going to be a continuing part of my life. If so, they need to know about my son, and I tell them. Otherwise, we will be constantly dancing around that fact. Better, I think, to have it out in the open. It then loses its ability to interfere with the relationship.

If, on the other hand, the person asking is simply passing through my life, then I feel no need to go any further than, "I had two children." Seldom does anyone catch the had, instead of have, and pursue it. If they do, or if they ask follow-up questions about ages and professions, I tell them first that my 26-year old son was killed in an accident. Then I tell them about my daughter. I am comfortable either way. If they are embarrassed, I see that as their problem. Just to show you how different we all are, however, my husband feels comfortable answering, "We have one child." That is what is right for him, and that is what he should say.

You decide what is right for you – then say it. That way you defuse that powerful question and it loses its ability to traumatize. Don't let it be a problem.

Mary Cleckley,  
TCF Lawrenceville, GA

## Death of the Young

People ask, Why do children or young people die, when they have lived so little? How do you know that they have lived so little? This crude measure of yours is time but; life is not measured in time.

This is just the same as to say, "Why is this saying, this poem, this picture, this piece of music so short; why was it broken off and not drawn out to the size of the longest speech, piece of music. or the largest picture?"

As the measure of length is inapplicable to the meaning (or greatness) of productions of wisdom or poetry; so even more evidently - it is applicable to life. How do you know what inner growth this soul accomplished in its short span: and what influence it had on others?

*From "Spiritual Life cannot Be Measured" by Tolstoy*

## Catching Butterflies



It often hurts to come upon reminders of my son  
Tho' often since I lost him I would search around for one  
Which always brought on sadness and the tears I  
would shed  
Were caused by names or faces, all things that I would  
dread.

But then one day I came upon a man who'd lost his son  
I found that things I ran from, he wouldn't even shun.  
But rather he would treasure and I said I wondered why  
He told me that he called them "Catching Butterflies."

This view of his intrigued me; I wanted to hear more  
And learned that he took all of them and carefully  
would store  
All of the reminders that I chose to push away  
He would tuck deep down inside his heart each and  
every day.

Now a name or likeness when catching me off guard  
Does not upset me as it did and I don't find it hard  
For now instead I see these times as opportunities  
To see my son awakened in these new fresh memories.

Dottie Williams,  
TCF Pittsburgh PA

## IT SEEMS TO ME THAT....

We are all individuals. We have lived our own lives in our own way. We have responded to the crises in our lives in our own way. We have to want desperately to survive our child's death, to put the pieces back together in some workable semblance of us.

For all of us there are times of incredible frustration, bewilderment, anger, rage. What can we do for ourselves to help work through some of those impossible moments? These are some of the things that have helped me and others:

**CRY**, go ahead and let out the tears! They build up, and there's pressure. Let them flow! It's not immoral, it's not illegal, and it's not fattening to cry. The absolute worst that could happen is that you discomfort someone who doesn't understand. **SO WHAT!?!**

**SCREAM**, good and loud (also a pressure releaser). If you can't find a place to scream alone, please do warn family members what you're about to do.

**SMASH**, choose something that doesn't matter and that won't hurt you: chipped dish, cardboard box or carton, a broken something you don't need. (Get china from garage sales.) Smash away. sweep it up, throw out the residue. The action of smashing lets off steam.

**POUND**, not to build something (but that's good, too), just to let off grieving's energy. Take a hammer and pound on a tree stump, a board that doesn't matter, an old phone directory, a pile of newspapers. Perhaps choose by how much noise you need or can accept.

**SCRUB**, floors take downward pressure, and that seems to suit better than walls. And after you've scrubbed, you can always buff with paste wax. Monotonous, rhythmic, forceful activity may end up a plus - a clean floor.

**RIP AND TEAR**, don't just toss away the junk mail. Reduce it to a million tiny pieces, and then put them all in the garbage.

**SWEAR**, sometimes the "bads" words are the words that best fit how we feel. Be honest. After a few years you mostly won't feel that bad, and you mostly won't have to describe things that way. When you need to allow yourself.

**EXERCISE**, floor exercises, walking, bike riding, swimming, tennis....something you enjoy that will use energy. Start small and build up.

**BEAT**, find a recipe for old-fashioned, home-made fudge. No easy stuff with marshmallows or cream cheese. Make the kind you must "beat vigorously for ten minutes". That's an energy expender!

**WORDS**, either aloud or to a friend who can understand and will listen or on paper to share or not, as you choose. (A private journal is great therapy!)

Grieving is hard work. Sometimes a short spell of doing something physical helps us get through the tough stuff.

*TCF Morris Area, NJ Newsletter*

**It** takes strength to make your way through grief, to grab a hold of life and let it pull you forward. Most times we don't see the strides in our grief every day. We get up, we work to make it through the day, and as we step into life it pulls us forward. Slowly but surely. We may slide backwards at times. We may feel totally stagnant some days. But if all goes well, at some point we look around and realize, holy crap. I have survived for days, or months, or years when I never thought it possible. The days have gotten easier, when I never thought they would. It wasn't about overnight transformations or butterflies or rainbows after the storm. It was about slowly but surely putting one foot in front of the other.

~ *Whatsyourgrief.com*

# Sibling Page

## “Don’t Cry Because It’s Over... Smile Because It Happened.”

*I cry when I think about how much I miss my brother!*

*I cry when I long to hear his voice, or see him come around the corner.*

*I cry when I think about all the times we won’t be sharing together anymore - holidays, birthdays, family times.*

*I cry when I think about the wonderful person he was, and how many more incredible things he could have accomplished, if he was still here.*

*I cry when I think of why he had to go so soon, and what I could have done to help him stay with us a little longer*

*I cry when I think of his pain, and I think of why it had to happen to someone so undeserving of it.*

*I cry when I think of my own two children, and the uncle they will never get to truly know, and the fun times they will never get to have together.*

*I cry when I think of all the people who will never get to meet my brother, and who will never get to experience his warmth and caring.*

*I cry when I think of the family of his own, that my brother will never get to have.*

*I cry when I think of the pain and hurt I see in my parents, as they endure the suffering caused from losing a child.*

*I cry when I think of the pain my sister and I share, as we work through the loss of our little brother.*

*I smile when I think of how happy we were to get a little brother.*

*I smile when I think of the thirty years of great times we had together.*

*I smile when I think of how much he was spoiled by us, as the baby of the family.*

*I smile when I think of how much I respected him, as he grew up to become an outstanding young man, Marine and Police Officer.*

*I smile when I think of his humor, outgoing personality, and awesome smile.*

*I smile when I think of our last few times together, and the talks we had, and the support he was there to lend.*

*I smile when I think of the all-too-few good years my children got to spend with their uncle Denny. I smile when I think of all the people he touched, and the lives he made such a difference in.*

*I smile when I think of how proud my family has always been of my brother.*

*I smile when I think of how loved my brother is, and always will be, no matter where he is.*

*I smile when I think of how lucky I am to have gotten to have someone like my brother in my life, no matter how far-too-short our time was together.*

*I smile when I think of him watching over me, and being with me, wherever I go, in my heart where he will never be forgotten.*

**“Don’t cry because it’s over...  
smile because it happened.”**

*Kelly Mallory Hermann, Chapter Affiliation Unknown*

### 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 - 610-515-3526

TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695

GRASP - 484-788-9440

(grief recovery after substance passing)

### Love Gift Form

*The Compassionate Friends is a 501(c)(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