



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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

Volume 39 Issue 9

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**September**

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 September 8
- Monday October 13
- Monday November 10

*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

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## The Sport of Grieving

It's not over till it's over, and it's never over. Wisdom taken from the people's philosopher and baseball great Yogi Berra. Strictly understood, it refers to the vicissitudes of the sports field. However, like many other Yogiisms, its message reaches way beyond the ball park. For me, the expression is the perfect summary of the grieving process experienced parents whose children have died. The game of life moves on. But the sense of loss and emptiness does not. The wish to see my son again, to be part of his evolving, maturing life, to leave this world knowing he will remain after I am gone, is a fantasy I cannot relinquish.

Meeting ordinary challenges seems as daunting as participating in a championship series that does not end. Succeeding at carrying out the mundane for a bereaved parent is akin to practicing a sport. I have begun to think of myself as an athlete, always in training, trying to improve my performance as a normal person. I visualize myself alert at bat; speeding, lightning fast, past the bases; sliding smoothly, safely home. All while having a hole in my heart from missing my son. Whatever is going on the outside, inside I am in a state of chronic grieving.

Chronic grieving, of course, is different than the pained paralysis immediately following the loss of a loved one. Eight years have passed since my son died, and my mourning has taken on a very different form than it did at eight months, eight weeks, or even eight days ago. I have more practice in fielding the curve balls that come my way. Routine inquiries like how many children do you have, or what are you doing for Mother's Day no longer send me in to a spasm of confusion and inarticulateness. I am not hurled into a silent rage, lips clamped tightly shut to avoid inappropriate retort, when privy to a long winded diatribe about parents' inane complaints about their kids. I am even able to muster sufficiently comforting commentary regarding the loss of a pet. I have become able to attend celebrations of contemporaries of my son. I can talk about my son in a neutral tone and move on in the conversation without having to excuse myself and take a time-out for a private crying jag.

Yet I still feel like a loser, in the sense that part of me is missing and always will be. The seduction of giving into depression still beckons. The opponents guilt, despair, resentment remain ready to attack when least expected. Refusing to give up on the future requires the practice, dedication, and the willingness to consistently step up the plate and perform like an A-list athlete.

A parent whose child has died, shows the world the resilience and courage of grace under the pressure of grieving.

The physical manifestation of my son is gone, but his being is not. I would prefer to have here, next to me, growing older as I grow old, but I must be satisfied with the reality of his presence in my consciousness only, evergreen and constant, forever young. Grieving is a way of accessing that presence. It is part of my emotional makeup. I welcome and embrace it. I have come to believe that grieving is an expression of love, and the love of your child is never over.

*Nora Yood, TCF Manhattan, NY*

## 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>Holly Cavanaugh</b> - Daughter of Bill Cavanaugh ; Daughter of Bill Cavanaugh; Sister of Bo Cavanaugh	Apr 27	Sep 25
<b>Christopher Cole</b> - Son of Donald Cole; Brother of Lauren Cole	Oct 10	Sep 10
<b>John Counterman, III</b> - Brother of Theresa Legarski	Sep 30	Nov 2
<b>Christopher Daud</b> - Son of Marie Daud	Nov 4	Sep 16
<b>Chelsie Graham</b> - Daughter of Chris and Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
<b>Raquel Guerra</b> - Daughter of Jeff and Kathi Kline	Sep 12	Sep 16
<b>David Hoagland, Jr</b> - Son of Gypsy Garrett	Sep 24	Apr 26
<b>Julie Howe</b> - Daughter of Timothy and Nancy Howe	Sep 3	Nov 19
<b>Troy Kidd, Jr.</b> - Son of Pamela Green; Brother of Amy & The Late Edwin Frantz	Sep 6	Jun 4
<b>Nykolas LaRosa</b> - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
<b>Anthony "Tony" Mariani, II</b> - Son of Kathleen Collins and the late Anthony E. Mariani; Stepson of Brian Collins; Brother of Matthew Mariani	Sep 13	Sep 6
<b>Jennifer Ortelli - Bryant</b> - Daughter of Wayne and Rebecca Ortelli; Sister of Christian Ortelli & the late Amy Ortelli	Oct 6	Sep 3
<b>Scott Rothrock</b> - Son of Larry and Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
<b>Konnor Roy</b> - Son of Dale and Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
<b>Leo Shiner</b> - Grandson of Morris and Maggie Shiner	Nov 23	Sep 8
<b>David Todd Smith</b> - Son of David and Kathleen Smith	Feb 25	Sep 17
<b>Constance Stewart</b> - Daughter of Joanne Stewart; Sister of The Late Kevin J. Stewart	Sep 23	Feb 1
<b>Erik Swanson</b> - Son of Susan Swanson	Sep 14	Feb 10
<b>Sean Virmalo</b> - Son of Udo and Janet L. Virmalo; Brother of Eric, Brett & Katelyn Virmalo	Sep 13	Apr 28
<b>Stephanie Volkert</b> - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
<b>Hunter Yeagle</b> - Son of Terree and Brett Oakwood	Aug 1	Sep 6



## Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:	Loved One
♥ Larry & Linda Rothrock	<b>Scott G. Rothrock</b> <i>Our love forever</i>
♥ Kathleen Collins	<b>Anthony E. Mariani II</b> <i>My Son and Sunshine, It's 25 years since I saw your smiling face and heard your laughter. Love you and keeping you in my heart until we are together again. Mom (Mama Mia)</i>
♥ Wayne & Rebecca Ortelli	<b>Jennifer Rebecca Ortelli Bryant</b> <i>We love you, We miss you and you are always in our thoughts. Love, Mom &amp; Dad</i>

**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**

## Sometimes

Sometimes,  
Memories are like rain showers  
Sprinkling down upon you  
Catching you unaware.

Sometimes, Memories are like thunderstorms  
Beating down upon you,  
Relentless in their downpour,  
And then they will cease,  
Leaving you tired and bruised.

Sometimes,  
Memories are like shadows  
Sneaking up behind you  
Following you around,  
Then they disappear,  
Leaving you sad and confused.

Sometimes,  
Memories are like comforters  
Surrounding you with warmth,  
Luxuriously abundant.  
And sometimes they stay,  
Wrapping you in contentment.

*by Marcia Updyke from Bereavement Magazine*

## Points to Ponder

"I don't think I'm getting any better." I have heard those words from virtually every bereaved parent I have ever talked to. Bereaved parents don't see their own grief improve because they are with it 24 hours per day. Answer the following questions to see if you are getting better:

Have I gotten through one hour without crying?  
Have I gotten through the morning without screaming?  
Have I slept at least two hours without waking?  
Have I caught myself smiling instead of crying when I think of my child?

We have to remember to take our grief one step at a time. If you answered "yes" to at least one question you are making progress - you have just taken another step.

*Pam Duke, TCF San Antonio, TX*



## Making Progress

The day you died,  
my spirit sought to turn away from life;

It could not face the pain  
that pierced its being like a knife.

I wanted to go with you.  
Why should my life go on?

I found no earthly reason  
to arise and greet the dawn.

I could not find a purpose;  
How pointless it all seemed.

Reality seemed distant.  
Was my life a bitter dream?

I seemed to be suspended  
in a tiny piece of time;  
Simply going through the motions  
like an actor or a mime.

Then, bit by bit, as I endured  
each never-ending day,  
I learned to smile and laugh again  
in a tenuous kind of way.

And now, although I miss you more  
than any words could tell,  
No longer am I mired in  
a brutal, needless hell.

I know I cannot escape  
my sadness and my pain.  
But I need not give it power  
to dominate again.

Once again I notice rainbows,  
the stars adrift in space,  
a flower's perfumed beauty,  
and the sunshine on my face.  
I need not search so desperately  
to find some subtle meaning,  
some purpose in the hours enclosed  
between daybreak and evening.

I find delight recaptured  
in hearing, touching, seeing;  
Once more I've come to know  
the peaceful joy of being.

*Peggy Kociscin, TCF Albuquerque, NM*

## What a Grandmother Is

*The thoughts of a six year old girl*

A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own, so she likes other people's little girls. A grandfather is a man-grandmother, he goes for walks with boys, and they talk about fishing and tractors and things like that.

Grandmas don't have to do anything except be there. They are old so they shouldn't play hard or run. It is enough if they drive us to the market where the pretend horse is and have lots of dimes ready. Or as they take us for walks they slow down past things like pretty leaves or caterpillars. They should never say "hurry up." Usually they are fat, but not too fat to tie the kid's shoes. They wear funny underwear and they can take their teeth and gums off. It is better if they don't typewrite or play cards except with us. They don't have to be smart, only answer questions like why dogs chase cats or how come God isn't married.

They don't talk baby talk, like visitors do, because it is hard to understand. When they read to us they don't skip words or mind if it is the same story again.

Everyone should try to have one, especially if you don't have television because grandmas are the only grownups who have got the time.

*TCF Atlanta, GA Newsletter*

## Grandparents Day

September 14, 2025

In our involvement in the grief over the death of our child, we fail to realize that grandparents also grieve. Although not in the same way we do, they do grieve. Their grief is two-sided, one for the child who is dear to them and the other for their own child who is suffering. Just as the parent does, the grandparent loses his future. One of the joys of grandparenthood is the knowledge that through grandchildren they achieve immortality. It is expected that their name will be carried on through them. At the death of their grandchild, that branch of their family tree is cut off. What should have been will not be. In cases of an only child, there will be no future generation. Just as for the parent, the family of the grandparent will never be complete again. They, too, feel the empty place at family gatherings. We bereaved parents must consider the needs of grandparents and at the same time be open and honest with them about our needs. We must let them know how they can help us, but at the same time, we must be aware that they, too, need help. Mutual sharing of feelings between bereaved parents and grandparents will be helpful to both in the recovery process. The sharing not only of painful feelings but also happy memories of the child with grandparents can be helpful for both and it can also create a deeper relationship in the family.

*Margaret Gerner TCF, St. Louis, MO*

## Still

*By Pearl Smith, TCF Pittsburgh, PA*

I STILL need to see you  
*But photos & movies now give you life*  
 I STILL need to hear you  
*But my memories must now suffice*  
 I STILL need to hold you  
*So I hug what you wore*  
 I STILL envision your smile  
*When you last walked out our door*  
 I STILL need to need you  
*So that my life can go on*  
 I STILL need to smell you  
*But your scent has now gone*  
 I STILL want to tell you  
*That you're now an aunt*  
 And watch your excitement  
*But I can't, no, I can't*  
 I STILL know how you'd love  
*Your precious new niece*



And you do it from heaven  
*So I must find in that peace*  
 I STILL need to tell you  
*The news of your friends*  
 Their careers, marriages & kids  
*The list just never ends*  
 I STILL need you to need me  
*If only for a while*  
 But I just keep STILL with my thoughts  
*With a tear & a smile*  
 I STILL need to cry  
*Over my loss & my pain*  
 I STILL need to reminisce  
*And do so again & again*  
 I STILL need to know  
*That YOU ARE & always WILL BE*  
 And at times when I'm STILL  
*I feel you are STILL with me*



## To Parents who Have Lost a Child Through Suicide

Parents and siblings of a young person who has completed suicide face an almost overwhelming burden of emotions. It is one of the cruelest tragedies that can happen to a family. To pull oneself out of the emotional wreckage is a mighty struggle. Each parent can be utterly devastated and unable to be supportive to their mate or to their surviving children. Other family members are shocked and unable to cope with the event. They do not know how to console or help us. Our friends wonder, "How could such a thing happen?" They, too, do not know how to help us. We struggle with the whys...the unanswered questions and painful memories.

We who count ourselves as survivors, we've made it a year, two years, some of us are in the third year, would like to share a few thoughts.

First, you are not alone. We understand whatever you may be feeling, for we have "been there!" Suicide can intensify the feelings of shock, denial, guilt, anger, de-pression - all a part of the grief process. The course of recovery is up and down... Give yourself plenty of time. You need a great deal of support, at least through the first year. The suicide of one's child raises painful questions, doubts and fears. We can find ourselves in a spiritual crisis. We question our beliefs and may feel cut off from God. Through sharing with others and listening to others who have walked the same path, you may gain some understanding of your reactions and learn some ways to cope.

But, most of all, we, who are in the process of rebuilding our lives, have not forgotten the dark hours of those early days and weeks when we thought we could not live again. We cannot offer you any shortcut through the pain. There isn't any. But you can help yourself along the way to healing. We can offer you support, encouragement and the hand of friendship.

*Jo Ann Dodson TCF, Louisville, KY*

## Passages

Time roars on, but I rear back  
Resisting, afraid to move on  
And leave you behind.

I was safe with you, unafraid  
In my own realm.  
If I heal, will you  
Be gone forever?

Your leaving opened new worlds to me.  
I have time now, my days  
And energies no longer  
Revolve around your needs.

The burden of my grief grows heavier, I must  
lessen the load just a little each day.  
My mind wanders and  
Begins to look ahead.

I want you to come with me into the future.  
Your youth protected my youth,  
now new beginnings  
eclipse the past.

My eyes strain as they search  
My heart for distant  
Memories, but your face fades  
As I reach out to you

All that remains are warm  
Feelings, smiles, tears and  
Glimpses of your love.  
left In the wake of your parting.

Will you forgive me if I go on? If you can't make  
this earthly journey through time with me.  
Will you then come along in  
My heart and wish me well?

*Betty Johnson TCF Rouge River, OR*

**Grief is not rational.** All the logic in the world will not allow you to escape the ache inside. It is an emotional jumble. The feelings are real: the mental and physical pain; the sense that it's all a dream and you'll wake soon; the denial; the caldron of boiling anger; the confusion; embarrassment of one's emotions; disappointment, and frustration. All these feelings (and others you've had) are normal during the grieving process. The fact that you feel and think these things says that you are *healthy!* You're experiencing what others have tasted in their walk through the valley of sorrow. You are not alone.

In some ways those in sorrow are the healthiest people in town. They know they hurt. They express their feelings. They cry. They ask the tough questions they know no one can fully answer. They get mad and say angry words. For those in grief, this is normal. It shows their minds and feelings and bodies are functioning in healthy ways.

Think of your life as a huge ball of yam with many strands of many different colors. Each colored strand represents one of the people you know and love. When one of them dies, the entire ball of yam has to be unwound to remove the single strand. That's how it feels when a family member dies. Your life is "unwound" ....

*From Gone But Not Lost By David W. Wiersbe*

# Sibling Page

## Do Not Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "discount grief". Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention on the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" comforting line said to siblings is "you be sure to take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me - I know I couldn't.

The grief of a sibling may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not to be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling who has not only lost a brother or sister, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront another factor; the loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of sibling death is very hard to take. The feelings of the sibling are often discounted when decisions are made on things ranging from funeral plans to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the taste and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things - such as favorite clothes or music can serve two purposes when planning a funeral or memorial service. First, their input helps ensure that the deceased received the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then - that's why I am writing this so people will know.

*Jane Machado, TCF Atlanta, GA*

## I Remember...

*I remember the toys,  
the fun and games,  
playing in the rain.*

*I remember baseball games,  
calling each other names.*

*The memories are so vast,  
but, always in the past.*



*The future holds no more  
Time has closed the door*



*A part of my past you'll  
always be,  
The future has been  
taken from me.  
One day we'll meet again  
till then --  
You're in my heart, my mind,  
and my soul  
I'll love you forevermore*

*Becke Adam-Hammack, TCF Louisville, KY.*

### 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