



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 40 Issue 3

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March

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.

TCF, Lehigh Valley
Chapter 1562

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Our Chapter Meetings are held at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm

Our support group provides a confidential and welcoming space for bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult (16 yr. +) siblings. We hope that by being among others who understand this profound pain, you will feel free to talk, cry, and share your experiences; it is also perfectly acceptable to simply come and listen.

To honor your loved one, we invite you to bring a picture of your child to display during the meeting on special days or at any time you wish. Refreshments brought in memory of your child are also warmly welcomed.

For additional information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting reminder text list call or text 835-201-4606

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Monday March 9
- Monday April 13

Cancellations will be posted on the website & sent to meeting list members

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting can be an emotional experience, but please know that everyone present has experienced the profound loss of a child and shares a deep understanding of the pain you are enduring. We cannot walk your unique grief journey for you, but we can offer to take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes; instead, we offer a safe space where we care, share, and understand.

Although each member's circumstances may differ, we have all "been there" and can genuinely say we understand. You are not alone.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your very first meeting. You likely arrived feeling hurt, confused, and deeply alone in your grief. Do you remember the quiet relief of realizing you weren't alone? That others had walked this path and survived? That same love and support you received is now a gift you hold for others. While you have grown stronger and may no longer need the meetings for your own healing, our newest members need *you*. Please consider returning to share the hope that was once shared with you.

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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Chapter & Meeting News

Please Note: The chapter's primary phone number has changed. Our new number is 835-201-4606 *All other contact details remain the same.*

Meetings

9 members braved the cold and attended the February meeting. The meeting topic was Memories of the Heart . Thank you to all who attended and shared special mementoes and memories of your children, grandchildren and siblings. We hope that everyone found some encouragement at the meeting.

Between Now and Then

"There are moments which mark your life. Moments when you realize nothing will ever be the same and time is divided into two parts, before this, and after this. ~ John Hobbes (Fallen)

We all know this moment in our lives, that line that designates before and after. It seems like an eternity ago, it seems like a moment ago, one breath away. It is now the pivotal moment in my life, where I measure the then and now.

My grief has not been transformed into some meaningful nugget of wisdom, but I have learned much wisdom, as I have learned to integrate grief into my life. These bits of wisdom were passed from others who had walked with grief longer. Early on, I asked someone how I would get through the years ahead, acknowledging my son's birthday, the holidays, the ordinary days. She said I would get through them by taking baby steps, focusing on the day, the moment, the breath in front of me. I and my family have traveled these past seven years by taking baby steps.

Some say that time heals and that grief changes, but I have found that instead, it is my response to grief that has changed. My arms still ache to give him a hug, my heart yearns for his physical presence, and grief can still knock me to my knees, but now, I get up faster, as my grief carrying 'muscles' are stronger. I am able to predict what moments are going to be challenging and find space and time to be with that grief filled moment. The days when I feel capable of accomplishing tasks while grieving, outnumber the days, when I just want to stay curled up on the couch. I can plant the tomatoes, weed the garden and can those tomatoes in the fall, while still grieving.

As I become more familiar with grief, I am also more aware of the resiliency that lies within me and from that resiliency, I feel strength to live with my life as it is. Perhaps the aspect of this that surprises me most is that I do feel joy. Joy is felt when I experience a beautiful sunset, a formation of spectacular clouds, time with my daughters, or when I discover a penny or other connection to my son. As time passes, and as I find balance in carrying my grief, I am also learning that joy

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered February Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Scott Arcury - Son of Frank and Beth Arcury ; Brother of Lauren Arcury	Mar 6	Jul 24
Tyler Balog - Son of Jeff and Grace Balog; Brother of Troy Balog	Mar 4	Feb 6
Christopher Brunner - Son of Cynthia Kern	Nov 29	Mar 20
Brandon Buck - Son of Kathryn Bauer	Mar 10	Jul 24
Jessica Finlayson -Daughter of Eric and Jean Dalstad; Sister of Rebecca Dalstad	Mar 19	Jan 22
John Fry - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
Eileen Collins Gant - Daughter of The Late John & Dorothy Collins; Sister of John, Steven, Kathleen & Brian Collins & MaryAnn Watkins	Mar 25	Feb 14
Sgt. Christopher Geiger -Son of George and Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Terrance, David, Timothy & the Late MichaelGeiger	Mar 30	Jul 9
Carly Grozier - Daughter of Cathie Given	Mar 4	Jan 17
Brian Gum - Son of Geary and Brenda Gum	Feb 21	Mar 5
John Kopitskie - Son of Steve and Lisa Kopitskie; Brother of Leslie, Sarah & Matthew	Mar 4	Jan 25
Emma McNulty - Daughter of Jessica and Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Mardelle Parenti-Blume - Daughter of Brian and Nancy Kleckner	Feb 9	Mar 1
Sheena Villa - Daughter of Bill Villa & Barbara Maquera; Step Daughter of Angie Villa; Sister of Patrick Villa, Cruz Maquera & Gianni Villa	Mar 23	Mar 24



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From: _____ Loved One _____

No Love Gifts This Month

What are Love Gifts?

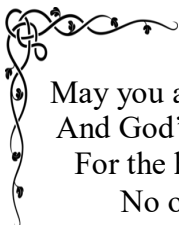
Love Gifts are heartfelt expressions of love given in memory of our precious children, family members, and friends. With no dues or fees our chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of Love Gift donations. Gifts can be made in any amount and are tax deductible. Please use the form on the last page of this newsletter and mail or bring to the meeting.

Many thanks to the following for their ongoing contributions to the chapter

Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville
For our meeting space

The Matt Kush Foundation
In Memory of Matt Kush

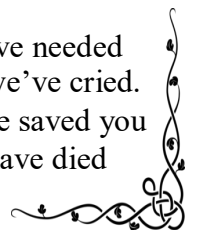
United Way
Payroll Contributors



May you always walk in sunshine
And God's love around you flow
For the happiness you gave us
No one will ever know

It broke our hearts to lose you
But you did not go alone
A part of us went with you
The day God called you home

A million times we've needed
you A million times we've cried.
If love could only have saved you
You never would have died



Continued from page 2

and sorrow sit side by side and there is room in my heart for both. We grieve deeply, we love deeper still.

As you take your own baby steps, becoming familiar with grief in your life, you too will discover the resiliency that lies within. Someday, you will find room in your heart for both your sorrow and your joy. As Mitch states in his poem, "you will learn to weave together unraveled threads on the loom of a falling star."

By Kim Bodeau, TCF Chippewa Falls

I'll Never Be The Same

Confusion reigns with in my heart,
Within my soul, because
I know I cannot ever be
The woman I once was.

How can I be complete and whole
When part of me is gone...
A special part... a precious part ...
That part that was my son

One cannot lose a child to death
And still remain the same
Untouched by tears of emptiness
Undaunted by the pain.

The cruelest nightmares come to pass
Life's better pill to swallow
In light of this, I can endure
All else that's yet to follow.

There's nothing that can fill the empty
Spaces that remain;
I've tried and failed so many times,
I cannot try again.

No trying to regain the past...
That's all a bitter sham...
It's time that I resigned myself
To be being who I am.

To the woman I've become
No acting out a part
A mother with a shattered dream
And a broken heart.

Peggy Kociscin, Unknown Chapter

My Search

I searched for you today
Through empty rooms and Photographs,
Through clouds above
And yards of grass.

I visited your grave,
The surface undisturbed.
I called your name, cried bitter tears,
And left - again unheard.

I drove along the road
You drove that fateful day;
But you weren't there to greet me,
So there I didn't stay.

I walked around your room,
so stark and empty now,
I need to find you, son,
Although I don't know how.

I donned a shirt that you once wore,
A treasured football jersey.
The faded fabric had no like;
My spirit felt no mercy.

My tears began, I screamed aloud,
"I need you here with me!"
But only silence echoed back -
There's no one here to see.

You've traveled far without me,
My heart feels like it's broken.
There's love here yet to give,
And many words unspoken.

My needs are very great
But now you are at peace;
I want to be there too
And share this pain's release.

I cannot find you, son,
And I must bear the pain
Of knowing we're apart
And here I must remain.

Perhaps some day I'll join you
In heaven up above.
And then I can unburden
This overflowing love.

June Muecke TCF, Houston-West Chapter

Grief and Your Health Releasing Tension Is Important

The loss of a loved one is a life-shattering experience. The stress that results from the deeply felt emotions of grief can cause chemical changes in the body which make grieving people more susceptible to diseases such as the common cold and other infections.

Ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, heart disease and cancer also are believed to be connected to the stress of grief. And if a physical illness was present before the loss, it probably will be exacerbated.

Statistics reveal a 40 percent higher death rate from cardiovascular disease among the widowed male population over age 55 than that of their married counterparts.

The connection between mind and body is not always recognized, but scientific evidence shows that what we think and feel have a direct effect on our biological systems. The bodies of all human beings react to stress in the same manner. In 1944 Hans Selye, a neurophysiologist, formulated the three phases of stress reactions. For our purpose we will discuss only phase one.

This phase occurs immediately at a stressful event, which, for the bereaved, is the death of a loved one. The brain translates the stress of grief into a chemical reaction in the body. This stimulates the appropriate gland to produce a protective hormone which prepares the body to "do battle." Normally, the crisis ends and another chemical is produced to stop the production of the first one.

However, in the case of grief the stress continues for months. The system doesn't operate as it should, which causes an abnormally high level of another chemical to

circulate in the blood. This chemical, in high levels, disrupts production of white blood cells, which locate and gobble up invading germs, viral particles or pre-cancerous cells. With the white cells unable to function properly, we are 100 percent more susceptible to most common germs.

Of course, this is an over-simplified description of body chemistry, but knowing the reason for susceptibility to illness during grief encourages us to take preventive measures.

You can't stop grief, but you can lessen the consequence of its continued stress by releasing the tension it creates. Consider the tea pot. If the steam in the pot doesn't blow off at intervals, the steam builds up and the pot blows. The stress of grief is like the boiling water in a tea pot. We need to release it periodically to prevent the damage prolonged stress does to our bodies.

The stress of grief can be released in two ways. One is to openly express your emotions. Allow yourself to cry and vent your anger and guilt in appropriate ways. A good hard cry releases a lot of tension. Also, talk about your loved one repeatedly with a caring listener.

The other release is daily exercise. Expending physical energy reduces stress. Brisk walks or swimming are especially helpful. If exercise isn't possible, at least attempt some daily physical activity, no matter how slight.

If you have lost a loved one, you *will* grieve. The question is, will you do it in a healthy way with good grief work, or will you attempt to avoid your grief and pay the price with a sick body? Only you can decide.

Margaret H. Gerner, MSW

Gently care for yourself. Be as tender toward yourself as you would hope to be toward others. You need not feel apologetic because your pain makes you the center of your own attention. Now, as at no other time, you are your most cherished possession and your richest resource.

Joe Healy, Executive Director, THEOS

March

The Month of In Between
In Between Winter
And In Between Spring

Your death has left me
Feeling in between
In between this world
And the next

Since you died
Nothing's the same
I no longer feel like I belong
Yet I haven't wings for Heaven
Though I have no heart for Earth

So I'm somewhere with March
I'm somewhere in between

~ Naomi Holzman
TCF Volusia/Flagler, FL

IF ONLY

*"IF ONLY" is the whip with which we
lash ourselves.*

- ❖ If only I had not bought him a motorcycle...
- ❖ If only I had not let her cross the street alone....
- ❖ If only I had forbidden him to drive while he was so tired...
- ❖ If only I hadn't permitted the surgery...
- ❖ If only I had allowed the surgery sooner...
- ❖ If only I had waited for trained personnel to move her...
- ❖ If only I were an all-knowing, all-powerful God,

I would not have allowed my child to die
But I am only human.

~ Theresa Hutchinson, Norman, OK TCF



I promise not to offer
Rainbows after storms
Or silver linings beyond the clouds
But if you have tears of sorrow,
I will share them.

If you have words of anger,
I will hear them.
If you have moments of confusion,
I will help you through them.

Perhaps Your tears of sorrow today
Will water the seeds
Of tomorrow's garden
Of spiritual growth, of worth priorities,
Of loving relationships and genuine
Understanding and compassion.
My sad friend, your weeping is not fruitless.

Nancy Williams TCF Marlbor, NJ

“Our grief journeys are not about closure; they are about adjustment and staying connected.” “The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.”

~ Father Simon Stephens,
founder of The Compassionate Friends

Sibling Page

COURAGE

My brother died three years ago when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident when he fell while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget every one else and lose myself.

My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have, too. I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself.

A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said, "This above all else, to thine own self be true." I do not make choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe is right and important.

I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me. Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone. I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about.

Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will? Life is not supposed to be easy but it

is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers.

I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

*Patricia Kelley TCF, Richmond, VA
In loving memory of my brother, Sean*

You'll Never Know

You will never know
How much I loved being your big sister
How much I loved looking out for you.
You will never know
How I would lie in bed late at night
And wait until you were home.
You will never know
How I would pretend to be asleep
As I heard you say goodnight to Fudge
And quietly pass by my door.
You will never know
How on that last night you left the house
waited wide awake listening for your familiar sound
But that sound never happened and you never
Passed by my door.
The house is so quiet now and the only sound
Is from myself - crying.
Because you will never know how much I miss
Being your big sister.

Elizabeth Cannon - TCF N. Reading, MA

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

<p>TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429</p> <p>TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695</p>	<p>TCF Easton - 610-577-5193</p> <p>GRASP - 484-788-9440 (grief recovery after substance passing)</p>
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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



Mail this form to:

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY
C/O KATHLEEN COLLINS
2971 PHEASANT DR.
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

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