



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

FEBRUARY 2015

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone **on meeting evenings only** is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

Feb 5 General Sharing

Mar 5 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

July 10-12 TCF National Conference, Dallas, TX
See page 3

Oct 9-11 2015 E. PA Regional Conference
See page 3 for information

We encourage newsletter writings from our members.

You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. **The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.**

ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations (which we call love gifts) given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved.

Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.

If you donate to **United Way** at your place of work, and wish your contribution to go to the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, you may do so by entering: **The Compassionate Friends - Valley Forge Chapter United Way ID# 04-104.** on your pledge form.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: CHAPTER LEADER
RHONDA GOMEZ**

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TCF Mission Statement

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.

INSIDE VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER

NEW MEMBERS

Brittany Hackman, brother ***Brian*** (27)

REFRESHMENTS

Rhonda & Frank Gomez in honor of all the children who have died too soon.

Refreshments may be donated in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda (484) 919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table.

LOVE GIFTS

Nina Bernstein, in loving memory of my son ***Andrew*** on his 10th anniversary.

Rose Marie Cote, in loving memory of my son ***Mark J. Cote*** (35).

Kathleen & Robert Grossi, in loving memory of our son,
James Michael Grossi on his anniversary 1/28.

Gerry & Nancy Hall, in memory of our beloved son
Douglas Byron Hall (27).

Kathleen & John Leeper, in loving remembrance of our dear son,
Shaun Michael Leeper on his anniversary 1/15.

Alfred Michini, in loving memory of my son ***Alfred J. Michini II***

Sheldon & Joan Plam, in loving memory of our son
Michael Tobiah Plam on his birthday 1/27.

Tony & Toni Riccardi, in loving memory of our son ***David Riccardi*** on his birthday 2/17.

Margaret & Robert Rooney, in loving memory of our daughter
Sharon Rooney on her birthday 1/30.

Carol Sannella, in loving memory of my son ***David Sannella*** (19)
and my husband ***Robert J. Sannella***.

Deborah Walter in loving memory of my son, ***Evan*** (20).

TCF Facebook

Join 22,000 people who are sharing their grief journey at The Compassionate Friends Facebook page. The page is designed to be informative and supportive. Check out the question or quote of the day. You can find the page by going to TCF's website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org and clicking on the Facebook icon. Or you can go to Facebook and do a search for "The Compassionate Friends/USA." Join us and contribute to the conversation.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

As you know a Regional Conference is being planned for October 9-11, 2015 at the Radisson Hotel in King of Prussia, PA.

We hope you will take the opportunity to share the conference weekend with us. It will be an indescribable experience with bereaved families who have "been there", and know the depth of the pain. There are no strangers, or social barriers, everyone becomes an instant friend. We share our emotional feelings with one another.

There will be seasoned bereaved families, who have proven life can be meaningful once more. They have learned to love, laugh, and live again, even though the love and memories of our children and siblings have not diminished.

If you are interested in serving on the planning committee, please join us at the next planning meeting scheduled for March 15, 1:30PM. This, and all planning meetings, will be held at the Radisson Hotel, King of Prussia, PA.

The Compassionate Friends National Conference 2015



OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children:

**We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter.
We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.**

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Madeleine Adler, son *J. Peter Adler* 2/5
William Bodulich, son *William W. Bodulich* 2/14
Ann Bruner, sister *Katy Wade* 2/8
Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class* 2/7
Wendy Coleman, daughter *Gabrielle* 2/19
Liz & Scott Conaghan, brother *Jan* 2/6
Jane Cox, son *Bill* 2/21
Bud Cunnane, son *Patrick* 2/14
Jim & Ruth Fairley, son *David Fairley* 2/5
Rochena & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan* 2/21
Charlie & Jill Fick, son *Michael Sternberg* 2/10
Laura Giordano, son *Peter* 2/12
Sandra Greenly, son *Michael Greenly* 2/18
Tim & Rosemarie Griffiths, son *Timothy Griffiths* 2/18
Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* 2/16
Lee & Patricia Grossman, daughter *Rachel Leah* 2/2
Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17
Othell & William Heaney son *Kevin* 2/14
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Noreen Schmucker* 2/15
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* 2/10
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* 2/10
Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. "Buddy" Hoesch* 2/16
Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman* 2/4
Marlene Hoffman, son *Jesse Hoffman* 2/3
Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* 2/4
Joan Jagers, son *John Costello* 2/17
Deborah Keevill, son *Brandon* 2/23
Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son *Philip V. Kennedy* 2/22
Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son *Edward Kiefski, Jr.* 2/11
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* 2/10
Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* 2/17
Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* 2/27
Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* 2/25
Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* 2/25
Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* 2/28
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* 2/19

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

Audrey Morasco, son *Christopher Morasco* 2/22
Mary Mulholland, son *Joseph McGowan* 2/25
John & Mary Ann Murphy, daughter *Maureen Murphy* 2/13
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II* 2/24
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan* 2/9
Emil Nunez, son *Oliver Nunez* 2/12
Robert & Jean Phillips, son *Robert Phillips* 2/23
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey* 2/18
Joan & Earl Reigel, daughter *Melissa Reigel* 2/19
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert mother (Bubbles) *Theresa Volpe* 2/27
Tony & Toni Riccardi, son *David Riccardi* 2/17
Jacqueline Rider, son *Matthew Rider* 2/14
Barbara Rossman, daughter *Kickole Lyn* 2/13
Linda Sandlin, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17
Bernice Scheinfield, son *Richard Scheinfield* 2/18
Rosemarie Scott-Griffiths, stepson *Timothy F. Griffiths* 2/18
Frank and Kay Shinnners , son *Erik Shinnners* 2/22
Felicia Skalecki, son *Zuko Iroh McNulty* 2/4
Janemarie Smith, daughter *Beth Jovanovic* 2/6
Gary Snyder, daughter *Alyse* 2/16
Margaret & Wade Stallard, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* 2/21
Elaine & Joe Stillwell, son *Denis E. O'Connor, III* 2/4
Robert & Nancy Thompson, friend *J. Peter Adler* 2/5
Esperanza & Libardo Toro, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro* 2/9
Barbara Torrens, brother *Robert Birmele* 2/18
Steven Tucker, son *Steven II* 2/27
Mek Wagner, daughter *Paige* 2/1
Henry & Elizabeth Weaver, grandson *Donald Smith, Jr.* 2/24
Gisela Witte, son *Bruce G Edlund* 2/24

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gary & Phyllis Adler, son *Matthew* - 2/18
Marilynn Anton, cousin/godmother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7
Nina Bernstein, son *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9
Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class* - 2/9
Lisa Connolly, daughter *Elyce Pindjak* - 2/10
Janet Cozzone, daughter *Jesika* - 2/19
Allison Crowder, daughter *Amber* - 2/21
Emilie Degville, daughter *Madeline* - 2/8
Harold & Marcia Epstein, grandson *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9
Danielle Evelyn, son *Samir* - 2/12

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* - 2/25
Frank Harms, son *Tyler* - 2/16
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* - 2/24
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* - 2/24
Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman* - 2/12
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* - 2/27
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* - 2/16
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* - 2/7
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* - 2/5
Tobie Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp* - 2/9
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner* - 2/10
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* - 2/13
Sue Lawlor, son *Jim* - 2/17
Janet Leflar, son *Scott* - 2/22
Mary MacFarland, son *Marc* - 2/12
Carl & Josie Malitsky, daughter *Cynthia Malitsky* - 2/8
James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son *Scott Mattiford* - 2/26
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* - 2/17
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* - 2/11
Alexandra Milas, sister *Demitra Vallianos* - 2/17
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* - 2/20
Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* - 2/5
Leonard & Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* - 2/23
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* - 2/27
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* - 2/3
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell* - 2/2
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* - 2/14
Kathy Nicholson, son *Frank* - 2/3
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II* - 2/29
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey* - 2/16/
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, son *Thomas Reinert, Jr.* - 2/19
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* - 2/3
Jacqueline Rider, son *Matthew Rider* 2/14
Lois Robinson, son *Randy* - 2/1
Felicia Skalecki, son *Zuko Iroh McNulty* - 2/4
Melissa Smith, daughter *Ava* - 2/5
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* - 2/20
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* - 2/9
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* - 2/8
Elaine & Tim Thomas, son *Seth Peterson* - 2/9

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole* - 2/26

Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan* - 2/2

Terry & Bob Wolfe, son and stepson *Steven Moyer* - 2/15

Rose Yannì, nephew *David Yannì* - 2/10

Frank & Dolores Yannì, son *David Yannì* - 2/10

Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* - 2/12

LETTING GO (AND HOLDING)

Oh, I wish I were a bug - and had a simpler life,
and a strong, protective shell for cover.

More - I wish I could return to days before she died
and tell her all the things I did not say.

Oh, I wish I had her back, could hold her on my lap,
smell her skin, feel her touch - just love her.

Well, I'm not a bug - no hard shell for me,
no simpler life without this awful knowledge

or going back to innocent years
and sunshine days spent only with the living.

Instead I wear my human skin
with all the joys and all the pains it offers

and live with deeper knowledge of the uncertainties of life,
reweaving the tapestry of me.

And vital to my being is knowing that she shares
the sacred memories shining out in flashes

and knows her dance of spirit's a great blessing in my life
and hears me tell her every way - I love you.

Excerpt from:- *Catching the Light*
 Coming Back to Life
 after the Death of a Child

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

DON'T TELL ME

Don't tell me that you understand,
Don't tell me that you know.
Don't tell me that I will survive,
How I will surely grow.

Don't tell me this is just a test,
That I am only blessed,
that I am chosen for this task,
Apart from all the rest.

Don't come at me with answers
That can only come from me.
Don't tell me how my grief will pass,
That I will soon be free.

Don't stand in pious judgment
Of the bonds I must untie.
Don't tell me how to suffer,
Don't tell me how to cry.

My life is filled with selfishness,
My pain is all I see,
But I need you, I need your love,
Unconditionally.

Accept me in my ups and downs,
I need someone to share.
Just hold my hand and let me cry,
and say, "My friend, I care".

Joanena Hendel

TCF- South Dade (Miami), FL

SHARED THOUGHTS ON ANGER

Anger is probably one of the worst stages of grief. It is a raw emotion, we do not choose to be angry. It won't go away by denying it. It can be very mild or a rage that will almost destroy us. Our anger intensifies when we feel something or someone should have prevented the death, or done more for our loved one. We almost feel it is our duty to lash out at what, or who, let us down. Many times our anger isn't about how they died, it's just the fact they died.

Because the situation we are in seems so senseless and we feel so helpless, we search for a reason for our tragedy. We want to understand why it happened, but seldom are there answers.

We often feel anger when those around us won't allow us to be human, expect us to bottle up our feelings, and pretend they don't exist so they don't have to deal with our pain. They justify being angry at a broken appliance or disabled car, but can't allow us to be angry when such a large part of our future has been taken from our lives. We can't verbally express it because it is not sociably acceptable, and it sometimes results in an explosion toward those around us. This causes anger to be misdirected and it becomes very destructive. It is most important to seek the right place and people to vent our feelings. We need to seek someone who is concerned, sympathetic, and will not pass judgment, but will gently make suggestions, and direct our anger into a positive direction. (this sounds as though we need a Compassionate Friend).

It is very healthy to be angry if we express it, and don't get stuck there. Many question their supreme being and the role they played. I feel this is a form of communicating, which can be necessary for some to obtain peace. We all take different roads to reach healing.

We have to face the pain in all areas of grief that we deal with. I needed to spend time with me. After much healing I asked myself what new traits or knowledge have I acquired that could possibly help me, and make a better world for other bereaved parents. The one thing that I needed most was to stay around to say, " Grieve in your own way, because how you grieve is probably best for you". The pain did soften, and eventually I was glad there was a tomorrow. I did not believe this was possible in my early stages of grief, you probably won't believe it either, but I have to tell you anyway.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* , TCF Valley Forge

REMINDER

Did you wake up in the morning
with tears in your heart?
And did you say to yourself
"I should not feel like crying
not like this, every morning."

But you do know the truth, don't you?
When life deals us such a tragic blow,
such enormous damage,
We need many mornings to recover.
We need more than a few moments to heal.

Take for yourself the grace
of one quiet healing-step at a time.
Trying to rush the work of grief,
will slow down your renewal.

You only need to remember
that you will recover some day.
You only need to remember
that we all have our own pace,
and we all move in our own measure.

Healing takes time. *Sascha Wagner*

EVERYTHING IS A FIRST

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me -- NEVER! The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality. FORGET? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere -- love and concern were translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say -- nothing is NORMAL.

Tragedy has brought a seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this. People ask me, "How are you?" Here is my answer; "I am mad, Dave died at the age of 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be strong"

Lisa Ann Jones, Avoca, PA

*Tears don't erase all the hurt,
Tears don't bring the dead to life,
But tears do help to ease the pain.*

Phillip W. Williams

A LETTER TO MY BROTHER

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer.

How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near?

Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you, I think of you everyday and feel you in my heart always.

Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness.

I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holeman Tuscaloosa, AL TCF



You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that come along." The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must try to do the thing you think you cannot do.

Eleanor Roosevelt

THE PATHWAY OF TEARS ... TO THE HAPPINESS OF MY MEMORIES

I walk in turmoil, I walk in peace.
I walk in loneliness, I walk with love.
I walk in sadness, I walk in happiness.
I dwell in the depths of despair, yet soar to the ecstasy of beyond.
I dwell in the shadows of darkness, yet strive for the light afar.
I feel the emptiness, the pain, the grief, the heavy grief
Yet search for the splendor of butterflies and the glory of rainbows.
I feel trampled and wasted and without cause.
I feel nothing.
I feel the love of memories overflowing within me.
I feel the warmth of his smile, his touch, his kiss, his arms around me, his innocence.
I remember the hurt, the misunderstanding, the alienation, the darkness, the
bleakness, the hopelessness, the devastation.
I remember his love, his caring, the scent of his hair, the touch of his hand, the little
boy playing in the sun.

And I remember the family I found who understood when no other wanted to understand.
I remember the guilt, the tears, the anger and hostility, the inability to carry on, to forgive,
to laugh again.

And I remember the family of Compassionate Friends who allowed that multitude of
feelings to flow, to surface and to happen, thus finally allowing me to forgive, to live again,
to smile again, to let happiness override unhappiness.

I thank my Nathan for his lessons of love, for his ability to see the beauty and life, in all
creatures, great and small.
I thank that little boy for his warmth, his sunshine, his gentleness, his wisdom, his innocence.
And I thank The Compassionate Friends for their patience, their understanding, and love,
their acceptance.

I know that as long as I live I will remember, sometimes I will hurt, I will ache and I
will weep in remembering.

Do we ever really let go? I doubt that it is possible to ever let go of that precious part of
ourselves that has ceased to be. That is how it is - in spite of ourselves, and despite
anyone else's beliefs.

Remember, remember the happiness of memories.
Remember the sadness, the tears of memories.
Remember always our children of the past; they dwell in the present of our hearts forever.
AND TRUE LOVE NEVER REALLY ENDS...

STEPS TO MAKING PROGRESS

ALLOW YOURSELF

- To be imperfect.
- Whatever brings you pleasure and a little peace.
- To remember your child in whatever way you feel appropriate.

FORCE YOURSELF

- To keep communication open.
- To accept offers of help from family & friends.
- To go through the old routines again.
- To really listen to your spouse and children.
- To try an activity you used to enjoy.

CONVINCE YOURSELF

- That every member of the family will and should grieve differently.
- That you won't feel dead inside forever.
- That your confusion about intimacy with your spouse is normal.

LET YOURSELF

- Off the hook for problems.
- Feel the anger.
- Feel whatever it is that you do feel about God.
- Treasure your special friends.

TEACH YOURSELF

- To establish small goals.
- Everything you can learn about grief.
- To ignore well-intentioned, unhelpful comments of others.
- To let go of the moment of your child's death.
- To embrace the memories of your child.

TALK TO YOURSELF

- To change the negative ways you think.
- About everything.

FORGIVE YOURSELF

- For not being the most perfect parent.
- For all the things you did or did not do.

FIND YOURSELF

- Now that you have changed into a different person.
- Without relying on drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Rely on positive techniques (reading, writing, new hobby, etc.)

INDULGE YOURSELF

- By being selfish, doing something just for you.
- Because you deserve it.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

- By talking out your feelings.
- In a safe atmosphere, such as The Compassionate Friends.
- Through a new activity.

FORGET YOURSELF

AND GIVE OF YOURSELF

- By seeking out other bereaved parents and others in trouble.
- By concentrating on others who are in pain.
- To discover that

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE

- As a tribute to your child.

Joe and Elizabeth Rousseau
The Compassionate Friends



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
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**...A bereavement organization
For parents, siblings & families
We offer friendship, love and understanding
We talk, we listen, we share, we care**

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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. ©2007