

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

JANUARY 2011

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

Please Mark Your Calendar

Jan 6 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Feb 3 General Sharing

July 15-17, 2011 34th National Conference

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: RECORD KEEPER, DIANA CLARK
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER LEADER
RHONDA GOMEZ**

Valley Forge Chapter

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NEW FRIENDS

Marc & Jean Burlock daughter *Sophie* (17 days)
Hans & Margaret Van Naerssen son *Eric* (34)
Jeffrey Smith son *Jacob Smith* (17)
Mary L. Field daughters *Lyndsay* (25) & *Karrun* (17)

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, and are sorry for the cause that brings you. Having been in the depths of despair, we know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. It is important that you attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. Our meetings offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

DECEMBER REFRESHMENTS

Frank & Rhonda Gomez in honor of their son, *Frankie*

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda Gomez (484)919-0820**, or you may sign the **refreshment chart** located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

Thank you to all who participated in giving gifts to the First Step Program for under privileged/handicapped children of Chester County. It is very comforting and satisfying to reach out to others in need while we are memorializing our beloved children and siblings.

LOVE GIFTS

Bobbie Coyle, in memory of my son *Whit* on his birthday 12/23
Catherine Dardozzi, in memory of my son *James Dardozzi*, (38)
and grandson *Evan Schmidt*.(8)
Helen Deery in memory of my son *Ronald J. Deery, Jr.* whose anniversary is 12/20
Jack & Freda Gross in loving memory of our daughter *Linda Joy* on her birthday 12/28.
Nora and Pete Heiss, in memory of our daughters *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* (31)
and *Noreen Schmucker* (53)
Rachel & Jacob Himmelstein, in loving memory of our son *Benjamin* (26)
Joan Kellett, in memory of my son *Daniel Thomas Kellett's* birthday 12/7
Gloria Koval, in memory of my son *Steven Koval* (18)
Alfred J. Michini in memory of *Ed Stimmler, Jr.*
James & Judith Snyder in loving memory of our son *David* (33)
Sara & Thomas Thiermann in memory of our daughter *Heather Thiermann* (32)
Priscilla Thoroughgood, Happy birthday to my loving daughter *Kendra Greer Enochs* 12/5.
Your memories continue to light up my life.
Frank & Dolores Yanni, in memory of our son *Daniel* (23)

14TH WORLD WIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

Many of us found the service to be gratifying as we took time to remember our beloved family members. There is solace in laying all else aside, and concentrating on the love & joy our children & siblings gave to those around them. It is helpful when we can express our love for them by reading their names, from a scroll and lighting a candle in their honor.

Thank you to all who planned & participated in the program. We also thank those who brought refreshments for the social time after the service.

More than fifty persons attended the service.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED FOR CO-LEADER

If you have resolved some of your grief, and feel capable of helping other bereaved families, it can be very healing to reach out to others in pain. The Chapter is looking for a volunteer to accept the position of Co-Leader with Rhonda. If interested, please contact Rhonda Gomez. Her contact information is on the front page of this newsletter.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.

We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know **“We need not walk alone”**.

A newsletter helps to keep our TCF family informed of local and national events. We consider this an important function of our program.

We are asking if you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, you will have the option to switch back to the old method. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email please contact: **Frank Gomez fgomez@hybridpoplars.com**

RESPONSE FEATURE ON VALLEY FORGE WEBSITE

The Valley Forge website has a feature for you to leave comments and suggestions that you would like to see in the Chapter Program. Please voice your opinions on how the Chapter is being conducted, and ways we might improve the program. The chapter belongs to all of us, please support it.

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.**

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Nancy Althouse, daughter *Donna Lee Althouse* 1/27
Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* 1/27
George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley* 1/21
Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* 1/14
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Daniel J. Cornely* 1/28
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* 1/21
Emilie Degville, daughter *Madeline* 1/20
Abigail Figueroa, son *Jose C Figueroa* 1/2
Sharon Hirst, son *Tom* 1/19
Barbara Jacobs, daughter *Pamela Faye* 1/3
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* 1/18
Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew* 1/29
John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Kaitlyn Logue* 1/19
Kathleen & Hugh Martin, Jr., son *Colin John C.J. 'Martin* 1/12
Linda Massey, son *Gene* 1/19
Debra McKinley - *Hastings*, brother *Ken* 1/23
Gerald & Margaret Milice, son *Gerald Milice* 1/28
Christine Miraglia, son *Ralph Miraglia* 1/26
Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael* 1/27
Barbara Pearl, son *Jason Seth Pearl* 1/14
Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison* 1/3
Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam* 1/27
Mary Jane Pollart, son *Mark Andrew Steffler* 1/30
Ann Gill Price, son *Douglas Gill* 1/9
Christine and Richard Purkiss, son *Adam Clark* 1/15
Steve & Joann Reynolds, son *Chris* 1/10
Margaret & Robert Rooney, daughter *Sharon Rooney* 1/30
Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* 1/31
Lynn & Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* 1/6
Barbara Smisko, daughter *Linda* 1/19
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* 1/24
Juan & Casey Terrero, son *Jalen* 1/29
Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas* 1/21
Weldon & Marie Tyson, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson* 1/22
Shirley Weir, daughter *Susan Weir-Grays* 1/22
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* 1/3
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* 1/13

We regret the omission of the following anniversary listings in the November & December newsletters:
Rochena & Pat Fatale son *Mark Longan* - 11/15
George & Barbara McClory daughter *Susan* - 12/25

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25
Irene & Abbe Cohen, nephew *Scott Alan Rosenthal* - 1/3
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* - 1/4
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David* - 1/11
Helen Dietrich, son *Joseph Dougherty* - 1/1
Susan Dillman, daughter *Heather Lynne Dillman* - 1/19
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* - 1/20
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* - 1/31
Soph & Lige Grahn Jr, son *Richard Grahn* - 1/14
Robert & Kathleen Grossi, son *James Michael Grossi* - 1/28
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Hall* - 1/25
George & Kay Hartman, son *Thomas R Hartman* - 1/27
Jeanne R Helmers, sister *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* - 1/9
Tammy & Allen Howard, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard* - 1/19
Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* - 1/1
Kathleen & John Leeper, son *Shaun Michael Leeper* - 1/15
Joan Lippre, son *John* - 1/26
Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* - 1/6
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* - 1/18
Anna E Marchese, son *Matthew Paul Marchese* - 1/29
Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* - 1/4
Diane Mazzagatti, son *John Pirocchi, Jr.* - 1/30
Michael & Maria McFadden, daughter *Rachel McFadden* - 1/14
Linda & Jim McGrath, son *Paul Drew McGrath* - 1/22
Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* - 1/31
Mark & Kathryn McNally, daughter *Beth Ann McNally* - 1/11
Felix & Shirley McShane, son *Brian* - 1/16
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy* - 1/11
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan* - 1/3
Jim & Bobbi O'Brien, daughter *Beth Hubbard* - 1/26
Peggy O'Brien, son *Rick O'Brien* - 1/9
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* - 1/1
Thomas & Demetra Patukas, son *George Thomas Patukas* - 1/4
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* - 1/21
Rosemary Peterson, son *Donald R. Peterson* - 1/25
Robert & Jean Phillips, son *Robert Phillips* - 1/3

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued

- Lyla T. Poulson**, brother *Joe* - 1/18
- Joe & Marti Purifico**, son *Jeffrey* - 1/18
- Vernice Quattlebaum**, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* - 1/12
- Roy Redman**, daughter *Carol* - 1/9
- Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert**, father (Bubbles) *Albert Volpe* - 1/18
- Carol Robinson**, son *Jim Kearney* - 1/17
- Margaret & Tom Saunders**, daughter *Katie* - 1/7
- Bernice Scheinfield**, son *Richard Scheinfield* - 1/26
- Janet & Jonathan Schultz**, friend *Scott Alan Rosenthal* - 1/3
- Patricia & Bertram Snead**, son *James Christopher Snead* - 1/6
- Ray & Lorraine Spear**, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear* - 1/30
- Shuchi & Peter Stanger**, sister *Urvi Thanawala* - 1/9
- Thomas & Sara Thiermann**, daughter *Heather Bruce Thiermann* - 1/23
- Allan Thomas**, son *Vernon Odins* - 1/1
- Janice Vanderslice**, son *Gregory Vanderslice* - 1/14
- Pat Villante**, daughter *Patty* - 1/30
- Alice Weaver**, daughter *Kristen* - 1/6

I hope I can do something to bring gladness to someone whose pleasures are few.
 I hope I can do something to soften another's sorrow and help a dream come true.
 I hope I can find time for a friendly greeting.
 I hope I can help someone to ease their heartache and try to welcome each day with a smile.
 I hope I can do something today, that tomorrow will prove really worthwhile.
 I hope to give love, kindness, friendship and cheer.
 May we learn there is still some joy in living, dear Compassionate Friends and find peace in the New Year.

Dorothy DeWyze TCF - Palatine, IL

AS TIME PASSES

As time passes
 And others forget
 Day by day
 I enter my lonely
 Room of memories
 And broken dreams
 And I cry.

And each day
 As I push forward
 I move a step ahead
 And then back
 But still gaining
 If even but a little.

Mary Rapke TCF, Grand Junction, CO

**COURAGE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEAR AND PAIN,
 BUT THE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE DESPITE FEAR AND PAIN.
 Rabbi Earl Grollman**

SHARED THOUGHTS ON FACING THE NEW YEAR

One of the dictionary's definitions for Holiday is "A day of enjoyment". For many newly bereaved, that word has taken on a new meaning of "tough times". It seems this season does not allow enough time to heal, before the next holiday is upon us. The new year stirs up all kinds of emotions. It sometimes reminds us that the year our child or sibling died is gone, and we have put more space between us and our loved one's death.

We are new persons now, we need to take time to know ourselves, our capabilities, and priorities. Many of us will be facing our "first". We know there will be some bad moments. It is important that we don't take on the *whole* New Year. A *day*, an *hour*, or a *moment* is what most grieving people have learned to try and cope with.

Putting unreal expectations and demands on ourselves can remove any sense of progress, and increase the sense of failure. The only New Year's resolution we need make is, "I will do the best I can, and at the pace I can". We can expect that some days will take all we can muster to just get through it. That in itself is a big accomplishment, recognize it as such. When we have survived yesterday and today, our coping skills have improved and will give us strength to take on tomorrow. Remember, recovery is a very slow process, we want relief before it is possible. We must take our time and talk with the right people. It is important to seek those who have experienced this depth of pain. These people will gently encourage and support us. It is vital to know others who have survived the loss of a child or sibling.

There will be ups and downs. We can be thankful for those up days, and know the down days are normal, but they won't last forever. We can, and will be better. I wish you could be where I am in my grief, without going through where I have been. Unfortunately, we have to go through it ourselves, but not alone. There is help through The Compassionate Friends, we are here to share the pain, as well as the hope. The whole concept of TCF is to lean on one another. Utilizing the help that others offer to us can help us survive, and give a sense of growth and healing to the one reaching out to us. We know the depth of your despair. We have been there, and together we can make it.

My New Year's wish for you is well said by *Ruth Eiseman* (TCF Louisville, KY):

Where there is pain, let there be softening.
Where there is bitterness, let there be acceptance.
Where there is silence, let there be communication.
Where there is despair, let there be hope.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

I am here to offer you hope
 How can I give this to people who come here
 with no hope?
 People whose hope dies with their children
 Look at us -- we who have come here before you
 Just as those who came before us
 They set the example -- and led the way
 They said to us, as we say to you
 "We are no different than you"
 We have no special abilities -- no magical powers
 We too are in pain and vulnerable

There was a time when we listened
 And never believed we could do
 What we now know we are capable of doing
 We said to ourselves -- if they can do it, we can try
 For we don't want to live like this forever

So we took one day at a time
 We dug in with our fingertips
 We pulled ourselves up each day
 We endured the pain and the disbelief and
 All the other things that come with this legacy of death
 We survived (survival is the first goal)
 We held onto what we did have
 Each other -- family - friends
 Surprisingly we persevered

Somehow -- almost unnoticed at first
 We were able to reach out to others
 We were able to say and do
 What we never thought we would again
 We had become believers

The pain is not gone
 We truly are forever changed and different people
 Our world is different not -- our children live
 in other ways
 But something happened with time and hard work --
 And our "Friends"

We can now laugh, feel happiness even occasional joy
 We now know that pain can wound us --
 but not destroy us
 We have experienced trial and error
 Gained more knowledge of ourselves as bereaved parents
 We now have expectations of pain -- but also
 Expectations of happiness For us this is not a contradiction -
 it is a reality

We have come to a place
 Where we can rise each day and face the pain
 Knowing that we can look ahead with
 anticipation
 for the good things to come
THAT - IS HOPE

We have turned a corner
 On the most difficult journey of our lives
 There are still many obstacles ahead
 But we now know we cannot only survive
 We can endure and overcome as well
 We have paid a terrible price
 But we are stronger and wiser than we have
 ever been
 And most of all - **WE HAVE EACH OTHER**

We know that there are those of you
 Who cannot relate to these words
 (We too could not relate when we were
 where you are now)
 We ask you to say -- "If they can do it,
 we can try"

What we offer you is Our hope
 As the days turn into weeks
 and the weeks into months
 and the months into years
 Our hope will become yours as well -- that
 Someday you will echo these words
 and pass them onto others

**WE ARE HERE FOR YOU
 AND TOGETHER WE WILL GO ON**

Survival + Hard Work = **HOPE**

Moe Beres, Chapter Leader, TCF Babylon NY

"I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance,"

William Faulkner, from his Nobel Prize for Literature Address, December 10, 1950, Stockholm, Sweden

TO MY BIG BROTHER

You were the best big brother.
You were such a true true friend.
You were someone to whom I could always
talk and always could depend.

Its hard to believe that you are not here.
Smiling, laughing ... Oh, I feel a tear.

I think back on many times gone by
and I just keep asking myself, why?
But, it makes me smile and it makes me laugh.
To think back on sweet memories of the past.

Moving up from Osborne Street
and joining a new school.
Greg and Grant were always there
even when we joined the pool.

Then we went off to Ocean City
to spend our summers at the shore.
The sand would drift, the ocean roll,
and the gulls would often soar.

I watched you go through LaSalle,
and then off to Penn State too.
I was your little sister
who was so very proud of you.

I think of you quite often.
For your thoughts I'd give a penny.
Did you know I had a son last year?
I know he'd love his uncle Denny.

You'll be with me forever.
And although we are apart.
You live forever in my memories
and always in my heart.

Kimberly Kearns Minetola Valley Forge, PA
for her brother, **Dennis Kearns, Jr.**

TOMORROW

Tomorrow
I'll try to understand her,
Try to understand the excitement behind
Those piercing hazel eyes,
Try to understand her zeal for life,
Tireless energy and love for others.

Tomorrow
I'll sit down beside her and get to know
This big sister of mine.
I'll get to know the skinny little girl
I grew up with and shared a bedroom with
for all our childhood years.

Tomorrow
I'll ask her about her boyfriend.
I'll ask her about her girlfriends.
I'll even ask her what her favorite subject is in
school.

Today?
I'm too busy.
I have too much to do.
She's getting on my nerves.

Today
She's borrowing my clothes and ruining them.
Today she's telling me to do all these chores for
her.
Today she's asking stupid questions.
I just don't feel like answering.

Today
I'm too tired.
But tomorrow
I'll tell her how much I love her,
I'll hug her and tell her she's pretty,
I'll tell her I'm glad I have a sister...
Tomorrow,
Tomorrow
Has finally come and she is gone!

Jean Anne Read
TCF, Tulsa , OK

Sometimes when just one person is missing -
The whole world seems so empty
Author unknown

**Wishes for Bereaved Parents/Siblings
For the New Year**

To the newly bereaved, we wish you patience-patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.

To the bereaved siblings, we wish you and your parents a new understanding of each others needs and the beginnings of good communications.

To those who are single parents, we wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss.

To those you who are plagued with guilt, we wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances and that your child knew that.

To those of you who have suffered multiple losses, those who have experienced the death of more than one child—we wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

To those of you who are deeply depressed, we wish you the first steps out of “the valley of the shadow”.

To those experiencing marital difficulties, after the death of your child, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other

To all fathers, we wish you the ability to express your grief, to move beyond society’s conditioning, to cry.

To those with few or no memories of your child, Perhaps because you suffered through a stillbirth, a miscarriage, or infant death, we wish you the sure knowledge that your child is a person and that your grief is real.

To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or all of your children, we offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

To those of you unable to cry, we wish you healing tears.

To those of you who are tired, exhausted from grieving, we wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

To all the others with special needs, that we have not mentioned, we wish you the understanding you need and the assurance you are loved.

Joe Rousseau, 1994 TCF President

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*

*Time is too slow for those who wait, Too swift for those who fear,
Too long for those who grieve, Too short for those who rejoice.
But, for those who Love ... Time is Eternal*

HENRY VANDYKE

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1. I will try not to expect so much understanding from others who have not walked the same path.
2. I will be kind to myself - health, appearance and time to be alone.
3. I will remember that I owe it to myself to try to enjoy life.
4. I will try to be more considerate of my spouse, children and parents. They, too, are coping and deserve my help.
5. I resolve, in memory of my child, to do something to help someone else. For I know, that in doing this, my child will live on through me.

TCF Newsletter, Mobile, AL

The New Year comes
When all the world is ready
for changes, resolutions
Great beginnings.

For us, to whom
That stroke of midnight means
A missing child remembered,
for us, the New Year comes
More like another darkness.

But let us not forget
That this may be the year
When love and hope and courage
Find each other somewhere
In the darkness
To lift their voices and speak;
Let there be light.

- *Sascha Wagner, TCF, Des Moines, IA*

DO IT YOUR WAY

I think it's only fair to tell you - there is no bereaved parent of the month award nor an award for the one with the stiffest upper lip. In fact, what you will find if you try to be the most stoic, brave and strong, the one doing too well, is instead of a reward, you suffer the consequences.

It is not possible to lose someone as vital as one's child and not have the pain or deep grief. You will find a great many non-bereaved people will encourage you to play the old, "*if you'll pretend your're okay and it's really not so bad we'll let you come play with us but if you're going to cry and talk about your dead child then you can't play the game.*"

This is one time in your life you don't have to meet anybody else's standards. There is nothing more unique about you than the way you express your grief - and you have that right, however it is manifested. A great deal of how you go about it is determined by how you have handled previous problems.

So, if someone tries to influence you to play the old game of rewarding you with attention because "you are doing well," tell them you're not doing well, that your child has died and you're hurting. Let them know it doesn't help you to pretend everything is okay. Do whatever it is you need to do to survive this trauma and don't worry about whether it pleases or displeases other people.

DO IT YOUR WAY !!

Mary Cleckley, TCF, Atlanta, GA