

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JANUARY 2012

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 5 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Feb 2 General Sharing

July 20-22, 2012 34th TCF National Conference & 5th International Gathering, Cost Mesa, CA

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**



Valley Forge Chapter

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DECEMBER REFRESHMENTS

Carol Bailey in honor of my son **Matt** on his 14th anniversary.

Janet Cozzone in honor of my daughter **Jessika** on her birthday Dec. 5th

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.

LOVE GIFTS

Jane Cox, in loving memory of my son **Bill** (44).

Joan Kellett, in loving memory of my son **Daniel Thomas Kellett** on his birthday Dec 7

Jeanne Helmers, in loving memory of my daughter **Betsy** (23) and my sister-in-law

Mary Ann Helmers Kemme (43) Always remembered and loved.

Victoria Bayle, in loving memory of my son **Bobby D. Bayle III** (31)

George & Barbara McClory, in loving memory of our daughter **Susan McClory Brown** on her anniversary Dec 25.

Barry & Sigrid Snow, in loving memory of our son **Robert Snow** (newborn) and our son **Kevin Snow** (23)

RESPONSE FEATURE ON VALLEY FORGE WEBSITE

The Valley Forge website (www.tcfvalleyforge.org) 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.

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**

**TCF 2012 National/International Conference
Costa Mesa, California Site of 35th TCF/USA National Conference;
5th International Gathering!**

The combined conference will be held July 20-22, 2012 in Costa Mesa, California.

A final lineup of popular keynoters is as follows:

- Lois Duncan is the prolific and award winning author of 48 books. But, the most difficult one she ever had to write was *Who Killed My Daughter?*, the story behind her search for the truth in the death of her 18-year-old daughter Kaitlyn Arquette in what police called a random drive by shooting.
- Kathy Eldon, journalist, author, producer, activist, and mother found her life changed forever when her 22-year-old son, Dan Eldon, A Reuters photographer, was stoned to death by an angry mob as he did his job in Somalia in July of 1993. Among her books are *Angel Catcher: A Journal of Loss and Remembrance* and *The Journey is the Destination*.
- Darcie Sims, always popular international keynote speaker, brings her wit and wisdom as a bereaved parent and certified grief management specialist to the podium in Costa Mesa. Co-founder of Grief, Inc., an international grief consulting firm, Darcie is a well known and respected author and speaker.
- The Reverend Canon Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends worldwide and bereaved sibling, will travel from his home in Moscow to share his thoughts with the large International and U.S. crowd that is expected to gather.

The International Gathering will include a Spanish workshop and sharing session. More than 100 workshops will be held on most topics related to grief after the death of a child. Special excursions are being planned for Wed, July 18 through Mon, July 23.

Hotel Reservations Now being Accepted!

You can now make reservations for the conference host hotel. The room block for the conference includes every room within the Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa hotel, we recommend that you reserve your room early if you wish to stay at the host hotel. Room charge is \$129 per night plus tax of approximately 11%. The room block is available July 17-24. You can also receive the special room rate July 14-16 and July 25-27, but subject to limited availability. Rooms are King Size (holds 2, roll-away bed available for \$10 per night) or double queen (maximum 4 per room). The first night's deposit is required at the time you reserve your room. Should your plans change, this deposit will be refunded as long as the room is cancelled at least one day prior to the start of your reservation. To reserve your room online, please go to [Online Reservations](#) or reservations directly to the hotel at 714-540-7000. Room block reservations will be taken until June 26th or until the room block is sold out, whichever comes first. Complimentary shuttles will run every 20 minutes between the hotel and John Wayne Airport (SNA). On-site parking for conference guests is \$7 per night or Valet \$25.00 per night.

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.

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
Marian Melchiorre, grandson *John* 1/6
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
Elise Rice, husband *James W. Rice, Sr.* 1/27
Margaret & Robert Rooney, daughter *Sharon Rooney* 1/30
Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* 1/31
Lynn & Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* 1/6
Linda Sciarra, son *John Anthony* 1/6
Gina Sebastianelli, brother *Tony Sebastianelli* 1/14
Barbara Smisko, daughter *Linda* 1/19
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* 1/24
Juan & Casey Terrero, son *Jalen* 1/29

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas* 1/21
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* 1/3
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* 1/13

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* - 1/4
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David* - 1/11
Adriene & Peter De Moerloose, daughter *Olivia* - 1/26
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-in-law *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* - 1/9
Tammy & Allen Howard, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard* - 1/19
Tracey-Anne Langley, sister *Nataly* - 1/23
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* 81 - 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
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* - 1/14
Pat Villante, daughter *Patty* - 1/30
Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen* - 1/6

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued

John O'Rourke, wife *Therese O'Rourke* - 1/18
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 -
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
Andrea Rohloff, son *Jim* 82 - 1/23
Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie* - 1/7
Bernice Scheinfeld, son *Richard Scheinfeld* - 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

I thought of you with love today,
but that is nothing new.
I thought about you yesterday,
and the day before that, too.
I think of you in silence,
I often say your name,
But all I have is memories
and your picture in a frame.
Your memory is my keepsake,
with which I'll never part.
God has you in his keeping,
I have you in my heart.

I shed tears for what might have been,
a million times I've cried.
If love alone could have saved you,
you never would have died.
In life I loved you dearly,
in death I love you still,
In my heart you hold a place
no one could ever fill.

It broke my heart to lose you,
but you didn't go alone,
For part of me went with you,
the day God took you home.

The Golden Gate stood open
He saw that you were getting tired,
and a cure was not to be,
So He put his arms around you,
and whispered, "Come with Me".
With tearful eyes we watched you suffer
and saw you fade away.
Although we loved you dearly,
we could not make you stay.
Your heart full of love stopped beating
your happy little hands to rest,
God broke our hearts to prove to us
that he only takes the best

Author unknown

SHARED THOUGHTS RESOLVING TO CARE FOR OURSELVES

We all approach the New Year very differently. Many cannot wait for the year our child or sibling died to pass, while others feel it separates them further from that person. But, the one thing most newly bereaved agree on, is that they are glad the holidays are over. For some the anticipation was far greater than the holiday itself. When pain and stress controls our lives it is very difficult to be optimistic.

We must try to face the New Year with the thought that we will not always be in this much pain. As difficult as it is for us to believe, the pain does soften. One day you will find a tolerable life again. It will not be the same as it was, but in many ways our lives can be richer, for we don't fret over the trivial things we used to. We have learned the real values in life. January is the time of year we struggle to put all our trying events behind us, and begin the year with new expectations. Unfortunately, that does not apply to our grief. We cannot "get on with our life" until we have spent sufficient time resolving our grief. All too often, we choose to repress the most painful emotions. They are too difficult to share with others, and we feel too fragile to deal with them. Once unresolved issues become delayed grief, it can be very damaging, and much harder to resolve.

Perhaps, one of our New Year resolutions should be allowing ourselves freedom to grieve. We need to take time to read, attend meetings, phone a friend, cry, walk, eat healthier, and in general remove our name from the bottom of the list of people to care for, we need to place ourselves at the top of the list, making ourselves number one. We cannot always be a reservoir of strength, this may be the time to let others care for us.

We can't expect this to be a good year if our grief is fresh. But, we should expect good things as well as bad. We have survived the impossible ordeal of the death and funeral. We have learned to take one day at a time, and not to set our expectations too high. If a good day comes, cherish it. Many times we have problems with the most important ingredient of recovery, and that is to learn to laugh and be happy again. We feel guilty for that moment of pleasure, and sometimes even feel it disrespectful. This is not a sign of forgetting, or a lack of love, it is a very healthy sign of hope.

I would like to share the last stanza of one of **Sascha Wagner's** poems, "The New Year", with you.

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 voice and speak
Let there be light.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmocker* , TCF Valley Forge

“WHY

I still cry and wonder, Why,
“Why” my son had to die?
He wasn't the only one, I know,
But, he was mine and I love him so.
So, until the day we meet in heaven,
He'll be in my heart and mind forever.

Gwen Kearns – TCF, Valley Forge, PA

Understand and accept that for you there is still a future, one that can be as bright and good as you make it. You have before you the rest of your life. What you do with it is entirely a matter of choice. There are no rules or laws that require you to mourn forever.

Harriet Sarnoff Shiff

I'M TIRED OF BEING STRONG

“Forgive me Lord, but I'm tired of being some of the things I've tried so hard to be ... I'm tired of being so capable, so efficient. I'm tired of the compliment, ‘You are such a strong person, I admire your strength’. I'm tired of being considered so patient and understanding that people dump their troubles on me. I'm tired of being so cheerful. I want to be free to be cross and complain and not get a ‘buck up, old chap’ routine. I'm tired of being considered so independent, so strong. Sometimes, at least sometimes, Lord, I want to be weak and helpless, able to lean on somebody, able to cry and be comforted. Lord, I guess there are just times when I want to be a child again, running to climb on my mother's lap.”

Marjorie Holmes “Hold Me Up a Little”

BITTERSWEET

Is good in chocolate...looks nice as a growing plant...but is hard to take when it's a family day with one child missing.

Joan D. Schmidt – TCF, Central Jersey

ONE MORE DAY

If I were granted one more day
To spend alone with you,
I'd say the things I should have said
And do all I wanted to do.

I'd tell you that I love you.
Did I tell you that before?
Or did I just take it for granted
That you'd always walk through the door?

I'd play all the games you asked me to play
But I was too busy, you see.
I'm sorry for the times I wasn't there,
Now, I wish you were here for me.

I'd tell you I miss you so very much.
You've been gone forever, it seems,
And I still hope that one of these days
I'll wake from this terrible dream.

If one more day were given to me
To tell you the things I'd say,
The only thing I'd want after that,
Would be just one more day.

Crystal Gibb

Bereavement Magazine

January 1991

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around
it.
Yet we squeeze by with, "How are you?"
and, "I 'm fine" ...
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
We talk about the weather.
We talk about work.
We talk about everything else -
except the elephant in the room.

There's an elephant in the room.
We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant
as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds.
for, you see, it is a very big elephant.
It has hurt us all,
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.
Oh, please, say her name.
Oh, please, say "Barbara" again.

Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death,
Perhaps we can talk about her life?
Can I say "Barbara" to you and not have you
look away?
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me
Alone ...
In a room ...
With an elephant.

Terry Kettering

MEMORIES

Within each tear that falls is a mirror
That reflects a special moment in our lives.
They trickle warmly down
And land in a puddle in my heart.

Tammy Tobac
TCF, Pittsburgh, PA

THE ANSWER IS BECAUSE

Early in the evening
Reluctant to the dawn
Scot would choose to die
Before the early morn
He chose the final method
The one that hurts the worst
He chose to die the loss -
The loss of his self worth.
I miss him something terrible
I wish he knew I cared
I wish he knew I loved him
And really would have shared.
I hope he's happy now
I hope he's found his peace
I hope he's found the things he wants
The things he really needs.

Stacy Blumenthal
in memory of her brother
TCF, St. Louis, MO

LIKE THE BUTTERFLY

It fluttered there, above my head,
Weightless in the soft breeze.
I reached up my hand, it lit upon my finger
Waving glistening wings gently,
Looked at me for timeless moments.
I smiled, reaching deep, and
Finding all those cherished memories.
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,
I knew we had said hello, once more.

Leslie Langford, sibling
TCF North Platte, NE

SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH GRIEF

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We do need the help of relatives and friends, and may need the help of Professional Counseling. At the same time, it is important for us to make the effort to help ourselves. Remember, that a lot of energy will be used for healing. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of “LOVE THY NEIGHBOR” - we forget the part - “AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF”. Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief has it’s unique side. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

1. **Go Gently**. Don’t rush too much. Your body needs energy for repair.
2. Don’t take on new responsibilities right away. Don’t over-extend yourself. **Keep decision making to a minimum**.
3. Accept help and support when offered.
4. Ask for help. Our family and friends can’t read our minds. It is very important to find someone who cares, understands, and with whom you may talk freely. It’s okay to need comforting.
5. Seek the support of others...Invite a relative/friend for dinner or overnight. Also, consider meeting new people.
6. Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.
7. Lean **into** the pain. It cannot be outrun. Let the grief/healing process run its full course.
8. Through this emotional period, it is okay to feel depressed. Crying does make you feel better.
9. If Sundays, Holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
10. Seek the help of a **qualified** Counselor or Clergy if grief is unresolved.
11. Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea and colas.
12. Good nutrition is important to help the healing process. (Decrease junk food and try to eat a balanced meal)
13. Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling/thinking. Hopefully, when you re-read it later, you will see that you are getting better.
14. **Read** -- there are many helpful books on grief. If grief is understood, it is a little easier to handle. A little less frightening.
15. Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.) It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and may aid sleep.

16. Begin towards building a pleasant time with family and friends. Don't feel guilty if you have a good time. Your loved one would want you to be happy.
17. It's OK to be angry. You may be angry at yourself, God, the one who died or just in general. Don't push it down—let it out. (Hit a pillow, scream, exercise, hit a punching bag, etc.)
18. Grief is sometimes an ambush. It comes and goes and takes TIME. Be kind to yourself.
19. Do things a little differently, yet try not to make a lot of changes. This sounds like a contradiction but it is not.
20. Plan new interest. Join a class, read, learn something new. Rediscover old interests, friends, activities.
21. Plan things to which you can look forward - a trip, visit, lunch with a friend. You can start building memories for tomorrow.
22. Find quotes/posters/poems that are helpful to you and post them where you can see them.
23. Talk to the one who died - out loud if you want.
24. Other ideas: take a hot relaxing bath; bask in the sun; take time for yourself (movie, theater, dinner). Be good to yourself.
25. Do something for someone else. Join a volunteer or support group. Helping others does much to ease the pain.
26. Have the courage to work through your grief.
27. Remember you will be better. Hold on to HOPE. Some days you just seem to exist, but better days will be back.
28. Simply stated, put balance in your life: PRAY, REST, WORK, AND PLAY.

Author Unknown

*God grant me serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and Wisdom to know the difference.*

Adapted from "Safe Place" by Anita Savage, Stanford, CT