

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JANUARY 2013

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.



Valley Forge Chapter

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Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest Please Mark Your Calendar

Jan 3, 2013 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Jan 3, 2013 Sibling Sharing (see page 2)

Feb 3 General Sharing

**Jul 5-7, 2013 TCF National Conference
Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston, MA**

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**

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.

NEW MEMBERS

Lisa & Dan DiBello, son *Joey* (3 months)
JoAnne Sands, son *Tyler* (22)

REFRESHMENTS

Carol Bailey in honor of our son, *Mathew's* anniversary.
Rhonda & Frank Gomez in honor of our son, *Frankie*

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

Jeanne Helmers in loving memory of my daughter, *Betsy Helmers* (23).
and my sister-in-law *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* (43).

Jacob Himmelstein in loving memory of my son,
Benjamin Himmelstein on his birthday November 19th.

Joan Kellet in loving memory of my son, Daniel on his 50th birthday.

Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner in loving memory of our daughter,
Anna Kreiner on her 44th birthday.

Margaret & Robert Rooney in loving memory of our daughter, *Sharon Rooney*.

Dolores & Frank Yanni in loving memory of our son, *David Yanni* (23).

Rose Cote in loving memory of my son *Mark Cote* (23) and husband *Paul Cote*.

Jamie Weaver in loving memory of my brother *Mark Cote* (23) and father *Paul Cote*.

SIBLING SHARING SESSIONS - BEGINS JANUARY 3, 2013

We are enthused about having an Adult Sibling group in our chapter again.

The facilitator for the siblings is Stephanie Bailey . She is 28 years old. Stephanie lost her 17 year old brother, Matthew Bailey, December 1997 in a plane crash.

This group will be open for ages of those in high school and older. The meetings will be held on the same evening as the parents, but in a separate room. All conversations will be confidential.

We need your participation to make this opportunity beneficial.

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.

CANCELLATION NOTIFICATION

It is impossible to notify all members who are planning to attend a meeting. If there is a need to cancel a TCF meeting due to inclement weather, power shortage or any situations that may occur preventing safe travel **Please view the Valley Forge web site: www.tcfvalleyforge.org**, for the latest update.

Frank Gomez did a bulk email to all those who receive the newsletter by enews to inform them about the cancellation of the November 2012 meeting night. We have approximately 600 in our database mailing list. Not knowing who plans to attend, this would be an impossible task to contact everyone by telephone.

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 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 TCF's website home page at www.compassionatefirends.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.

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
Joan Hornsby, daughter *Jackie* 1/30
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
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
Ruth Pluck, niece *Jackie* 1/30
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

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

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
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* 1/3
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* 1/13

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25
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 Byron 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
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* - 1/6
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* - 1/18
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
Anna E Marchese, son *Matthew Paul Marchese* - 1/29
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy* - 1/11
Ashlie Nawrocki, sister *Chereen* - 1/9
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan* - 1/3
Jim & Bobbi O'Brien, daughter *Beth Hubbard* - 1/26

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES continued

Peggy O'Brien, son *Rick O'Brien* - 1/9
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* - 1/1
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* - 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
Gary Snyder, daughter *Alyse* - 1/3
Ray & Lorraine Spear, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear* - 1/30
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

Now I Know

I never knew, when you lost your child,
What you were going through.
I wasn't there, I stayed away,
I just deserted you.
I didn't know the words to say,
I didn't know the things to do.
I think your pain so frightened me,
I didn't know how to comfort you.

And then one day my child died.
You were the first one there.
You quietly stayed by my side, listened,
And held me as I cried.
You didn't leave, you didn't go,
The lesson learned is ...
Now I know.

Alice Kerr, Lower Bucks Co. PA

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GRIEF AND THE NEW YEAR

Most of us have a new perspective about the New Year since our children or siblings have died. For some it is a relief to close the door on the year of our tragedy, and try to perceive the new year with small rays of hope. But, for others it was the last year we shared our life with our loved one, and can't bear to see that segment of our life close. Each of us view new seasons differently, for most of us it is a difficult time.

First of all we must allow ourselves to grieve, both privately and with other family members. We can't expect other family members to grieve exactly as we do. Each needs space to salve their own needs, which may be different than ours. We find it helps to set time aside for our grief. Perhaps, that is why going to Compassionate Friends meetings is so healing for many, where we devote the evening to dealing with our feelings, and hoping for suggestions from others who have "made it through".

It is important to take care of ourselves physically, for bad health can alter our mood, and how we respond to the daily happenings in our life. We need to be considerate of other family members, for they are also struggling to get their lives back together. Both kindness and antagonism will snowball, and return back to us. It helps to put all we possibly can into being kind and considerate to those around us. This does not mean taking abuse, or ignoring our own needs.

If a good hour, or day, comes our way, relish it, we deserved it. Sometimes this causes some guilt on our part. We must remember, the last thing our child or sibling would want, is for us to feel guilt for a moment of peace. The love we have for our children, is usually matched in return with love for us. So, I'm sure they are glad when we can have relief from the terrible torment we are going through.

We **must** try to see some good in the new year, and a reason to go on. When newly bereaved, it is difficult to even want to look for good things. Everything looks so trivial compared to our loss, for we are so depressed, and hurting so bad. For those of us who are further along in our grief we'll remember how difficult it is to believe anything about "getting better". We now know it does get tolerable, and you too, will make it through. You will not always be so miserable, it takes a lot of work to get there. Healing comes through sharing, crying, feeling guilty and angry, or any aspect of grief it takes for us to move forward.

We do grow through our grief, by becoming more loving, understanding, and compassionate to those around us. Most of us have refined our priorities, and have no time for trivial complaints of others, for we now know there are greater things in life to be concerned with. We have learned the true meaning of desperation, and know it comes from broken people, not broken appliances.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge, PA

**I cannot see your face, but my heart holds the sound of your voice
And the soft brightness which is your soul. *Amy Lowell* "The Touch of You"**

DEALING WITH YOUR GRIEF

For those of us who are newly bereaved, discussion of this topic may give some guidance and encouragement, as we discover that there is something we can do to help alleviate the devastating pain of the loss of our child. For those of us who have already been down that path and continue to do our "grief work", our discussion may provide new avenues of self help. By our sharing, we reach others who will recognize our expressed experiences as their own, and come to know that we understand as perhaps few others can, that we have survived and that they can survive and go on with their lives, not in the same way, but in a measure of peace and serenity.

We have suffered a shock and pain unknown to others and unthinkable to us before the loss of our child. Both our physical and mental beings have been severely affected. There is no abracadabra that will remove the pain and confusion, but the effects can be lessened and softened by some steps which give us something to do about something which nothing can be done.

Physical Needs and How to Meet Them --

1. Eat right. Try to include fresh vegetables, fruit and nourishing food. Some find it helps to eat small meals.
2. Get sufficient sleep and rest - this varies with the individual. For now, you may need to avoid responsibilities and activities that you took care of for others without a second thought. Let someone else do it this year and let them know that you may be able to assume this responsibility again later.
3. Exercise regularly. Some of us walk at the University Mall and at the County High track. Spa workouts are helpful.
4. Find a doctor who recognizes the special problems of grief. This may be difficult as we understand that grief is not emphasized greatly in training of doctors.
5. DECREASE alcohol and medication consumption.

Mental Needs of Bereaved Parents - What You Can Do

1. Be nice to yourself. Learn what your capabilities are at this time and don't expect too much of yourself too soon. You be the judge of what to do. Don't let others impose their "shoulds", "ought to" and "guilts" on you.
2. Include some time with others as you can. try not to seclude yourself. Try to make the effort to keep in touch with people who make you feel better, not worse.
3. Seek professional help if necessary, but be sure to check out the credentials of the counselor, especially regarding training in the area of grief.
4. If married, don't expect too much of your spouse. He or she may not be able to give at this time - you are in the same river of grief, but are in two different canoes. Make allowances of each other - don't be judgmental.
5. Learn to express your anger in constructive ways, such as - writing it down, talking it over with a close friend or a Compassionate Friend, be physically active, attend as many meetings of The Compassionate Friends as you can. **Please remember, you may experience emotional hangover after a meeting and know that this, too, is a part of our healing and grief work and another step on our road to recovery.**

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

The depth of your sorrow diminishes slowly and, at times, imperceptibly. Your recovery is not an act of disloyalty to the one who has died. Nor is it achieved by forgetting the past. Try to strike a delicate balance between a yesterday that should be remembered and a tomorrow that must be created.

Author Unknown

HOPE

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

Our Wishes For You

To those of you whose pain is fresh and raw, and still have courage to come and share with us, and give us healing through your pain, we send you love and compassion.

To those of you whose pain of grief, anger, and frustration has begun to soften, we wish you hope and healing.

To those of you who have found life can be good again, and can tenderly remember your child tinged with much less sorrow, and not be overwhelmed, we wish you fond memories, and a meaningful holiday.

To those of you who are struggling in your marriage or relationship, we wish you patience and understanding to accept one another for what you can give.

To those of you who are struggling with your spirituality, we wish you peace.

To those of you who give words of comfort and hope to another in the depth of despair, we say "Thank You".

To those of you who so willingly lend a hand in doing all the chores, And those who give financial support, that holds the Valley Forge Chapter together, So we can provide a safe haven for all the bereaved to come and support one another, we say "Thank You"

We send you love, hope, compassion and a hug, and wish you peace.

Marie and Ken Hofmockel