

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

JULY 2010

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 at Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule

Please Mark Your Calendar

- July 2-4 33rd TCF National Conference, Arlington, VA
(See page 6)
- July 7 General Sharing & Death by Suicide
(Note date change:- Wednesday - see page 2)
- Aug 5 General Sharing
- Aug 7 Butterfly Release - Chanticleer Gardens
(see page 3)

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 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.**

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, DIANA CLARK
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
RHONDA GOMEZ or ANN MURRAY**



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DATE CHANGE OF JULY MEETING

The July meeting date has been changed to Wednesday July 7th. The change is do to the conflict with the date of National Conference. We are very pleased to have 9 members of our chapter attending the conference, leaving on July 1st.

NEW FRIENDS

Kathy Nicholson, son *Frank* (39)

Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* (8)

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.

JUNE REFRESHMENTS

Mary Lou Harrison, son *Scott* on his 13th Anniversary

Ann Murray, son *Jonathan* on his 33rd Anniversary.

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

LOVE GIFTS

Joann & Gary Chavez, in loving memory of our son *Christopher Dale Chavez* (21)

Carole Solomon, in memory of my beloved niece *Avery Silverman* (17)

Margaret & Matthew Strickler, in memory of *Timothy Strickler* on his 36th birthday.

We love and miss you so much. Mom, Dad, David, Andrew & Ted.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

The cost of printing our newsletter has increased approximately 60%. The monthly income from love gifts is not enough to cover our printing and bulk mailing costs.

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

**BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO ATTEND**

BUTTERFLIES MUST BE ORDERED BY JUNE 30TH

**CHANTICLEER GARDEN -- Open 10-5
786 Church Road Wayne, PA 19087
Phone: 610-687-4163 www.ChanticleerGarden.org**

**Saturday, August 7, 2010 at 11 AM
(This event will be held rain or shine)**

**Cost \$9 per butterfly - June 30th last day to place order.
\$4 per person for Garden admission. No admission fee for children under 16.
Entrance fee is free to Radnor Township Library card holders.**

Chanticleer asks that we collect the Garden admissions fees. Upon entrance, identify yourself as a member of Valley Forge Compassionate Friends. A chapter member will collect your admission fees at the release site.

Water will be provided by the chapter.

Chanticleer Gardens is wheel chair accessible, picnic tables available. Please bring folding chairs or a blanket to sit on. Parking is limited, please car pool if you can.

A family can order one butterfly to share, or order one butterfly for each family member. You may order as many butterflies as you wish. If you are unable to attend on this date, we can release the butterfly that you have purchased in your loved one's name. The names of all loved ones will be read during the program.

For questions, please call TCF Valley Forge 484-919-0820

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Total number of butterflies ordered: _____ \$9.00 each - Total money (no credit cards) enclosed: _____

**Please forward registration and check to: Rhonda Gomez, 12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343
For directions view www.chanticleergarden.org**

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: **Additions or corrections to this list should be given to the editors, Marie & Ken Hofmockel.**

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.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* 7/27
Mary Auger, son *Eric R. Ehmman* 7/13
Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* 7/1
Joann & Gary Chavez, son *Christopher Dale Chavez* 7/19
Tracy & Mike Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* 7/19
Hazel Corbin, daughter *Dayle C Rutledge* 7/7
Tom & Judy Hahn, daughter *Erica Hilley* 7/2
Russell L. Kinder, daughter *Susanna B. Kinder* 7/22
Al & Sue Koenig, daughter *Emily Grace Koenig* 7/8
Joan Lippre, son *John* 7/16
Robert McCullough, daughter *Caroline Patricia McCullough* 7/19
Felix & Shirley McShane, son *Brian* 7/30
Cameron and Sandra Meikle, daughter *Laura* 7/4
Alexandra Milas, brother *Nicholas Stathes* 7/1
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Brian Michael Murphy* 7/20
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, brother *Jack Coladonato* 7/14
Gary & Patricia Otto, son *Benjamin Otto* 7/26
Marlene Patrone, son *Alfred M. Patrone, Jr.* 7/11
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Walter C. Peters* 7/4
son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* 7/25
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* 7/11
Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* 7/18
Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* 7/24
Abigail Schwartz, mother *Barbra* 7/15
Mike & Beverly Smith, son *Ryan* 7/18
Helen Smith, son *Bob Smith* 7/2
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* 7/15
Judy & Jim Snyder, son *David Snyder* 7/18
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* 7/27
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* 7/16
Linda Spinks, son *Robert* 7/9
Lisa M Spinks, brother *Robert* 7/9
Patsy Ann Spitz, son *Paul David Spitz* 7/6
Linda Sposato, daughter *Bernadette Funaro* 7/23
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* 7/1
Anne & Charles Swann, daughter *Katherine Anne Swann* 7/12

JULY BIRDDAYS continued

Jean Sykora, son *Mark* 7/14
Chris & Larry Teal, son *Wade Teal* 7/30
Renee Teufel, son *Gregory* 7/28
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* 7/21
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* 7/3
Barbara Tuller, son *Charles* 7/3
Pat Villante, daughter *Laura* 7/28
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria* 7/4

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

Sylvia Abramson, grand-daughter *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Mary Auger, son *Eric R. Ehmann* - 7/5
Lucille Bagwell, son *Lew* - 7/22/
Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* - 7/27
Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* - 7/14
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* - 7/9
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown* - 7/23
Joanne & Tom Christman, son *Kyle R. O'Neill* - 7/20
Catherine Dardozzi, grandson *Evan Schmidt* - 7/15
Judith M. Deutsch, son *Anthony Deutsch* - 7/21
Vanessa Diaz, friends child *Samir* - 7/12
Kenneth Frantz, son *Kenneth Frantz, Jr.* - 7/14
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gailey* - 7/14/
Ron & Sue Gamza, daughter & grandson *Rachel & Troy* - 7/24
Gwen & Walt Gearhart, grandson *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12
Carolyn & Allen Gephart, son *Joseph Malec* - 7/14
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, son *Frank Jr.* - 7/17
Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Beatrice K Hildebrandt, son *John R. Hildebrandt* - 7/12
Mark & Vicki Hoffman, son *Eric Daniel Hoffman* - 7/21
Dennis & Lois Ianovale, son *Dennis* - 7/6
Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* - 7/16
Donna Leathers, son *Brandon M* - 7/4
Maryann Lockyer, son *Keith* - 7/15
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* - 7/27
Maryellen & James Madden, daughter *Anne Marie Madden* - 7/28
Lynne & John Malloy, son *David Gross* - 7/1
Linda Massey, son *Gene* - 7/16
Frank & Bernadette McAllister, son *Christopher J. McAllister* - 7/11
Felix & Shirley McShane, son *Brian* - 7/30
Cheryl Mezzaroba, son *Lon Mezzaroba* - 7/24
Betty & Dick Miller, son *Raymond "Jim"* - 7/26
Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake* - 7/29

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that the person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope can temper, considerably, the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by the pastor of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words:

“Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul.

Victor M. Parachin

NO VACATION

There is no vacation from your absence.
Every morning I awake I am a bereaved parent.
Every noon I feel the hole in my heart.
Every evening my arms are empty.
My life is busy now, but not quite full.
My heart is mended, but not quite healed.
For the rest of my life every moment
will be lived without you.
There is no vacation from your absence.

Kathy Boynette, TCF, MS Gulf Coast Chapter

GRIEF IS LIKE A BUCKET OF WATER

You can start out with a full bucket, but when you find it too heavy to carry, you can bump it a little, so that some spills, and carry it a little farther. As you continue, you bump it again so that it becomes lighter to carry for the longer distance. You must do the same with grief. To keep the burden from becoming intolerable, you must "bump the bucket" a little and let a little of your grief spill out from time to time, so that you can continue.

Author Unknown

Vacation time is upon us again. You may be having trouble with that very thought. My only advice is to go where it is the most comfortable for you. Large places with many people may not be the answer this year. The family-oriented spots may make it more obvious that one of your blessings is missing. It may be that you are locked into plans that were made before the tragedy of your child's death. You may hesitate to change these plans if they involve other people. In the beginning, I, personally, could only be with people who understood my feelings. If the other people involved are not sensitive and understanding, you may want to reconsider your plans. Good, warm, caring friends - who will allow you to be wherever it is that you are - can be a great comfort. Keeping it simple, with a back door through which you can escape, if necessary, can be the best answer. Going away and coming home can be a problem in the beginning. Know that it is normal.

Whatever it is that you do and wherever it is that you go, I hope you will keep in mind that it won't always be this painful. IT WILL BE BETTER. Be patient. If you can find peace and enjoyment, do it! You deserve it, and it doesn't mean you don't care.

Mary Cleckley TCF - Atlanta, GA

Waterbugs and Dragonflies

Down below the surface of a quiet pond lived a little colony of water bugs. They were a happy colony, living far away from the sun. For many months they were very busy, scurrying over the soft mud on the bottom of the pond. They did notice that every once in a while one of their colony seemed to lose interest in going about with its friends. Clinging to the stem of a lily, it gradually moved out of sight and was seen no more.

'Look!' said one of the water bugs to another, 'One of our colony is climbing up the lily stalk. Where do you suppose she is going?' Up, up, up it went slowly. Even as they watched, the water bug disappeared from sight. Its friends waited and waited but it didn't return. 'That's funny!' said one water bug to another. 'Wasn't she happy here?' asked a second water bug. 'Where do you suppose she went?' wondered a third. No one had an answer. They were greatly puzzled.

Finally one of the water bugs, the leader of the colony, gathered its friends together. 'I have an idea. The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk must promise to come back and tell us where she went and why.' 'We promise', they said solemnly.

One spring day, not long after, the very water bug who had suggested the plan found himself climbing up the lily stalk. Up, up, up he went. Before he knew what was happening, he had broken through the surface of the water, and had fallen onto the broad, green lily pad above.

When he awoke, he looked about with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. A startling change had come to his old body. His movement revealed four silver wings and a long tail. Even as he struggled, he felt an impulse to move his wings. The warmth of the sun soon dried the moisture from the new body. He moved his wings again and suddenly found himself up above the water. He had become a dragonfly.

Swooping and dipping in great curves, he flew through the air. He felt exhilarated in the new atmosphere. By and by, the new dragonfly lighted happily on a lily pad to rest. Then it was that he chanced to look below to the bottom of the pond. Why, he was right above his old friends, the water bugs!. There they were, scurrying about, just as he had been doing some time before. Then the dragonfly remembered his promise: 'The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk will come back and tell where he or she went and why'.

Without thinking, the dragonfly darted down. Suddenly he hit the surface of the water and bounced away. Now that he was a dragonfly he could no longer go into the water. 'I can't return!' he said in dismay. 'At least I tried, but I can't keep my promise. Even if I could go back, not one of the water bugs would know me in my new body. I guess I'll just have to wait until they become dragonflies too. Then they'll understand what happened to me, and where I went'.

And the dragonfly winged off happily into its wonderful new world of sun and air.

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SIBLING GRIEF

We often call bereaved siblings the forgotten mourners. Frequently friends and family treat them as secondary grievers, and the approach is "How are your parents doing?", therefore, giving siblings the impression their grief is not as significant as parental grief. Often we hear the ridiculous suggestion that siblings should be strong, and take care of their parents. When siblings cannot reduce the parental grief they feel they have failed, which adds to their low self-esteem.

Our longest lifetime relationship is usually with our siblings. We count on them to always be there for us. We share with them our innermost secrets, as both children and adults. We even expect them to be there for our unborn children, as well as support when our parents are aged. They are our confidant, our best friend, our idol, our advisor, and sometimes they are younger, and we are the same things to them.

When our sibling dies, we no longer feel so invincible, we worry who will be next, and quickly learn how final death is. Our family is disrupted, our sibling position changes, we may now be the oldest, the youngest, or the only child. We cannot avoid the pain of grief, our parents are different now, and they are so consumed with their own grief, that they cannot be the parents that we want them to be for us, this lessens our security. Everyone's personality has changed. We not only have to adjust to the new person we have become, but also to the difference that the whole family has undergone. Sometimes it is very difficult to be in the home, when it is so filled with pain, and so much of the laughter has turned to tears. Frequently friends are easier to talk to, than our family. The fear of losing another family member makes the parents so over protective that they take away the carefree feeling of life, which adds to the stress of sibling grief.

When our loss is at an early age, it is not uncommon to later grieve as an adult for that person. I was 12 years old, when I lost my first sibling. My brother was 30. I later went through an entirely different grief cycle as an adult. At the age of 12, I felt my brother was much older. As I got nearer and surpassed the age of 30, I then realized how young he was. This stirred up new emotions.

The hurting and healing causes us to redefine our priorities in life. Grief frequently causes us to have more compassion for hurting people. We learn to appreciate people more than things, and frequently a life long commitment is made to make the world a better place. It is our choice to decide what we will do with the experience we have so painfully endured.

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

IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

It's half a year, he's left us now
It's time to say goodbye.
His body's gone, it lives no more
It's time to let him die.

I've held on tight, onto his soul
And kept him close to me.
The time has come to let him loose
And set his spirit free.

Kevin Hofmockel - Valley Forge Chapter, PA
For his brother *Douglas Alan Hofmockel* 8/27/65 - 2/7/82

STRENGTH

In the early days of my grief,
A tear would well up in my eyes,
A lump would form in my throat,
But you would not know - I would hide it.
For the strong do not cry ...
And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,
I would look ahead and see that wall
That I had attempted to go around,
As an ever-present reminder of a wall yet
not scaled.
Yet I did not attempt to scale it,
for the strong will survive ...
And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,
I learned to climb over that wall
step by step,
Remembering, crying, grieving,
And the tears flowed steadily as I
painstakingly went
For the way was long, but I did make it ...
For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief,
A tear will well up in my eyes,
A lump will form in my throat
But I will let that tear fall
And you will see it.
Through it you will see that I still hurt
And I care ..
For I am strong.

Terry Jago,
TCF, Regina, Canada

**In your gathering of memories, invite
your courage to remember everything.**
Sasha Wagner

**A FATHER’S VIEW OF
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS:
COURAGE, SURPRIS, AND UNDERSTANDING**

Attendance Requirement: Courage

I don’t think I am unique, I did not want to attend a meeting of Compassionate Friends. I was coerced by my wife. It was subtle but effective. My son, on the other hand, made a devil’s deal; he agreed to go to the next meeting in exchange for a favor - his debt some weeks away. The thought of discussing death nauseated me. We, my son and I, had made a bad deal.

The Meeting: A Surprise

I was surprised to find I was not the only man to have lost a child. There was a reality to that recognition. My loss, not unlike yours, is a personal matter. No one can tell me how I feel or how I ought to feel. Yet, the group never made me feel guilty about my selfishness; they understood.

The Result: An Understanding

Compassionate Friends is not an efficient organization. There are no systems, no quick easy cures. Grief is a catharsis. Most of what you hear there you will dismiss, it will not apply to you. But, there are nuggets - small ideas you will want to try or things you will want to think about. Some you will try. Many you will discard. Only a few will help the pain. These you will treasure.

Your friends and associates may try to understand your grief and try to help. They can do neither. They don’t understand. And they try to help. My son felt he had gained little from the meeting. Yet, he left feeling he had helped someone else deal with his grief. What a marvelous satisfaction for a 15 - year old.

What’s in it for you? Compassionate Friends is here to help - to listen, to suggest, to understand. If you handle your grief well, you do not need Compassionate Friends, But we need you. Your approach or method of dealing with grief could help one or more of us. Please share it.

Bob Watts 7/96 TCF, Stamford, CT

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