



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

MARCH 2014

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

Mar 6 Parental General Sharing & Death by suicide

Apr 3 General Sharing

**July 11-13 37th Compassionate Friends
National Conference, Chicago.**

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**

Chapter Leaders

Rhonda & Frank Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone
email: sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org

Database Record Keeper

Frank Gomez

Webmaster

Frank Gomez
www.tcfvalleyforge.org

Newsletter Editors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel
340 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(610)337-1907
email: kenhofmockel@comcast.net

Love Gift Acknowledgements

Connie Nolan

Treasurer

Emil Nunez

Librarian

Carole Bailey

Chapter Advisors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel

Regional Coordinators

Ann Walsh 717-515-3000
Bobbi Milne 215-801-2840

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free: (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org
email: national_office@compassionatefriends.org

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.

We send our love and compassion to the family of **Thomas Gibbons**, who passed away on January 3, 2014. Thomas was preceded in death by his 29 year old son, **Paul**. Thomas leaves his wife, **Rita** and **5 children**.

Thomas & Rita came to The Compassionate Friends, Valley Forge Chapter, in April 1999, shortly after the death of their son Paul. They have been very supportive to the mission of our organization.

REFRESHMENTS

Patricia & Lee Grossman in memory of their daughter **Rachel Leah** (32).

Marie & Ken Hofmockel in memory of all the TCF children.

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

LOVE GIFTS

Nina Bernstein, in loving memory of my son,

Andrew Voluck on his anniversary February 9th

Rita Gibbons, in loving memory of my husband,

Thomas Gibbons who passed away on January 3rd.

Patricia & Marco Giubilato in loving memory of their daughter, **Robyn**

Giubilato Zarelli on her birthday March 18th.

Nancy & John Logue, in loving memory of their daughter,

Kailyn on her birthday January 19th.

Ken, Vivian & Kenny Maahs, in loving memory of our daughter/sister,

Kirsen Allison Dawn on her anniversary January 18th.

William & Carol Meehan, in loving memory of our son,

Patrick on his birthday March 11th.

Audrey Morasco, in loving memory of my son,

Christopher on his birthday February 22nd.

Margaret & Robert Rooney, in loving memory of our daughter,

Sharon Rooney, on her anniversary Jan. 30th.

Nancy & Arthur Singer, in loving memory of our son,

Jeffrey Vincent Singer on his birthday and anniversary March 9th.

TCF Facebook

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

MARCH 2014

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The Arc

Chester County

*For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*

December 18, 2013

Compassionate Friends
C/O Rhonda Gomez
12 Brook Cir
Glenmoore, PA 19343-1204

Dear Ms. Gomez,

Thank you for understanding the need to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Chester County. You join many other committed and motivated people who choose to invest in The Arc of Chester County and the future of those we serve. For that, we thank you.

Every gift is appreciated and your generous donation of toys helps us provide the best quality services and support to children with disabilities. The Arc has worked to establish programs which ensure that individuals with disabilities experience success in their lives. Your contribution makes this work possible. Thank you for joining in the quest to *achieve with us*.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Meikrantz
Executive Director

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.**

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Dardozi, son *James Dardozi* 3/7
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* 3/29
Richard & Martha Fenoglio, daughter *Judith Fenoglio Daw* 3/30
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* 3/26
Bill & Karen Flavin, son *Chad Flavin* 3/7
Lisa Foos, son *Curtis* 3/14
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* 3/20
Marco & Patricia Giubilato, daughter *Robin Giubilato Zarelli* 3/18
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* 3/25
Margaret C Jones, son *Christopher* 3/17
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* 3/11
Terry Kozlewski, son *Frankie* 3/12
Tracey-Anne Langley, sister *Nataly* 3/25
Julie Lauderback, son *Donovan Lauderback* 3/5
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* 3/17
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* 3/22
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* 3/9
Tom & Charmaine Malik, son *Danny Malik* 3/3
Laurie and Lee Maxwell, son *Dan* 3/14
Samantha Maxwell, brother *Dan* 3/14
Jeff and Kathy McCarron, daughter *Sarah* 3/30
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* 3/11
Greg and Mary Miller, son *David* 3/26
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/18
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Willamson* 3/8
Danielle Murtha, brother *Jake* 3/27
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* 3/3
Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J.* 3/27
Terri Pfeiffer, son *Matthew* 3/6
Raymond & Marguerite Posluszny, son *Alex Posluszny* 3/22
Lyla T. Poulson, daughter *Kimberly Poulson* 3/4
Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* 3/5
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* 3/24
Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* 3/26
Lisa and John Russo, son *Casey* 3/17

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Susan Lipson, nephew *Justin Ingerman* - 3/18
Elaine & James Madden, son *Andrew Madden* - 3/6
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* - 3/9
Dan Markle, brother *Matt Markle* - 3/3
Anne McClenachan, brother *Andy McClenachan* - 3/30
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael* - 3/30
Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter *Renee Meisenhelder* - 3/2
Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter *Kim* - 3/3
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* - 3/16
Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* - 3/9
George & Estelle Null, daughter *Kathleen "Kathy" Null* - 3/7
Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son *Richard H. Owens, Jr.* - 3/26
Michele Paul, sister *Desiree Halas* - 3/11
Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son *Bradley Poore* - 3/19
Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* - 3/8
Becky Rotkowski, brother *Brian* - 3/14
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* - 3/9
James & Betty Treichler, son *James Treichler Jr.* - 3/13
Akhil & Judy Tripathi, son *Sunil* - 3/17
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* - 3/16
Hans & Margaret van Naerssen, son *Eric* - 3/25
Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver* - 3/18
Laurie Wyche, son *Jameson Wyche* - 3/1
Pat Zimmerman, daughter *Gabrielle* - 3/23

WHO WILL LOVE YOU?

Who will love you when I'm gone,
Whisper your name when twilight comes,
Long to touch your hand, then shed a tear,
Or write a poem to you
As I have often done?

Who will love you when I'm gone,
Sit in silence in your lonely room
And dream of times when I could
Watch you in your sleep as I have often done?

Who will love you when I'm gone
And keep you in his breast
And feel the gaping pain
That makes me weep
As I have often done?

Who will love you when I'm gone
And stir up childhood mem'ries
Of sandboxes, swings and trains?
I will, my son, for we will be
Together in eternity.

David Ziv, TCF, Warrington, PA

SHARED THOUGHTS ON THE COMFORTED BECOMING THE COMFORTER

Guarding the safety of our children is probably one the highest priorities on every parent's list. Our children's dying diminishes us as human beings. We feel we have failed to protect the most important thing in our life. The death robs us of our zest for living. It can take the power, motivation, and joy from our jobs, whether it be a menial or the ultimate position in life. For this period of time it is essential that we become the comforted. Recognizing the depth of our loss and despair is not self-pity. It can help us justify our reactions and behavior, and know our feelings are normal for what we are experiencing. We must except our feelings, even though they are not happy, and cause much dampness from our tears. We need to keep grief alive long enough to resolve it. This does not mean a lifetime of grief, but it is much longer than we want it to be, and certainly much longer than non-bereaved people will allow us.

Our pain can not be explained or finished. Our children are our very essence of life, and our joy of living. They have made us part of who and what we are. Life gave us the blessing of our children, how empty our lives would have been had we never known them. We savor the dreams of what they might have become. After much grieving and healing, we become stronger in the broken places. As Don Hackett writes about our dead children, he says, "they become gentle and soft music in our souls".

We all need to be comforted in early grief. Often, people try too soon to become a comforter to family members. Laying our grief aside to reach out can be a mistake. For we can help others most by letting our fragmented and fragile bodies and minds heal first. That is why airline attendants always say, in an emergency, to place your oxygen mask on before your child's, so you will be better equipped to offer help. After your grief has softened, we hope you will become a comforter to your family, and your Compassionate Friends. A large part of comforting should be to build comforters for those who will need us, and in turn, the comforter's reward is great and completes the grief cycle for them.

Healing can take place just by knowing others have survived what we feel is impossible to endure. Sometimes we have to struggle to do what we think we can not do. You can be happy again. We wish happiness could come sooner, but it doesn't. The loss is too great for a quick fix to be lasting. We must go through the sorrow and pain before we can hear the gentle and soft music in our souls. Often we have the volume control in our hand and blame our hearing, rather than turning up the music. Listen for and expect the gentle and soft music in your soul.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time.
Some people bear three -
All they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have.
Edward Everett Hale

TO MY FRIENDS

This is my pain.
 Let me feel it.
 Don't tell me not to cry.
 I know you mean well, dear friend,
 But telling me not to cry,
 Tells me you don't understand.
 But, how could you, really?
 Have you lost a child?
 Have you given birth, loved and laughed,
 And then watched him die?
 This is my pain.
 Let me feel it.
 Be patient with me when I want
 to scream
 to cry
 or be crabby

or talk about him
 or be alone.
 This is my pain.
 Let me feel it.
 I know you'd take it all away, if you could.
 But you can't.
 I can't avoid it,
 Or stuff it down somewhere,
 Or run away from it
 Because it always finds me again.
 The cold, hard fact is,
 That I had a child that died,
 and it hurts.
 So I know, that this is my pain,
 And I have to feel it.
 To get through it

Carolyn Johnson, Yuba City Chapter, CA

A GRANDPARENT'S POINT OF VIEW

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives - family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss that is felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don't understand the many feelings that you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you that is gone, but in time, you can learn to live with the part that is still here.

Ruth Eaton, TCF, Savannah, GA

There is love in our pain ...

Memories in our grief ...

Hope in our sharing...

author unknown

REMINISCING

I thought about you today
As I bade farewell for school.
I thought about you today
When I heard a certain song.
I thought about you today
As the teacher passed the test.
I thought about you today
When the kids jumped in the leaves.
I thought about you today
As a stranger passed my way.
I thought about you today
When I got drenched in the rain.
I thought about you today
As I sat in church and prayed.
I thought about you today
When I embraced an old friend.
I thought about you today
As the day turned into night.
I will think of you again
When I close my eyes and dream.

Lori Phillips
TCF, Scranton, PA

TO JAMES MY LITTLE BROTHER

Life itself, holds many special things;
One of which was you.
I tried to understand your ways,
And reasons for what you would do.
Sometimes I would take you aside,
And hold you by the hand;
Not trying to embarrass you,
But to help you become a man.
From skateboarding and skiing
And teaching you how to dance,
To sitting down and chatting
About school, girls and romance.

You tried to learn the right way
And not to do things wrong;
But whether or not you did it right
I knew you'd get along.
I'll love you always so very deep
And now that things are done,
I'll try not to look on it
As losing a brother
But as God gaining a son.

I love you, Christopher
Lois English, Canoga Park CA

YESTERDAY/TODAY

Yesterday I was angry
At you, at God, at me, at everyone.
Yesterday my heart was filled with grief,
Sadness, emptiness, confusion, denial.
Yesterday I broke down, gave up on life, me
Today I have a new understanding.
A stronger faith,
A stronger heart,
A stronger soul.
Today I still miss you, need you, love you.
Today I smiled, laughed, and loved.
Yesterday my soul almost died.
Today your soul saved mine.

Tracey Gadbois, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Have you ever kept pains so deep inside,
that you thought it was gone,
thought it had died,
'til one day you find the pain you've
been keeping has not really died –
it only was sleeping,
and when it awakens,
you find that the pain hurts in a way
you cannot explain?

It still makes you weep and cry tears
like a flood, but this time it's
different and almost feels good.

Author Unknown

BEATITUDES FOR THOSE WHO COMFORT

Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.
Blessed are those who do not always have a quick "comforting" answer.
Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved's closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.
Blessed are those who hear with their hearts and not with their minds.
Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.
Blessed are those who admit their uncomfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.
Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.
Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.
Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.
Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

Jacki Deems

SEARCHING

Once again, my list has vanished; I'm forever searching, searching, could it be that what I'm really
it was here, but now it's missing. they must be here, and I need them! searching for,
Keys and glasses disappearing, Could it be that what is missing, my child,
books and letters overdue. what I want this very minute is you?

Joyce Andrews TCF, Sugar Land, TX

HUGGING: PERFECT CURE FOR WHATEVER AILS YOU

No movable parts
No batteries to wear out
No periodic checkups
Low energy consumption
High energy yield
Inflation proof
No monthly requirements
Theft proof
Non-taxable
Non-polluting
And, of course, fully returnable
Hugging is healthy.
It relieves tension,
Combats depression,
Reduces stress,
Improves blood circulation.
It's invigorating.
It's rejuvenating.
It elevates self-esteem.
It generates good will.
It has no unpleasant side effects.
It is nothing less than a miracle drug!

Author Unknown

ROOMS AND THINGS

How many people have suggested to you in subtle and not so subtle ways that you'd be better off if you'd only go ahead and get rid of your child's things and redo the room? You see, they think that the holding on to these things is morbid. These people, who have never suffered the loss of one of their children, really do not understand that you have to do your grief work, and whether you do this sad task now or later really doesn't affect the length or depth of your pain.

Some parents need to make the changes and decisions about personal belongings as soon as possible after the death. Having the chore ahead of them is more painful than the doing. These parents are advised, however, to go slowly when disposing of belongings. It may seem to you, also, that not seeing or having anything around to remind you of your dead child will somehow make your pain less. Later, though, when your grief has softened, you may find you need that special something, but by then it's too late.

On the other hand, you may try to keep everything, and it may take many months and several acts of sorting through the belongings at intervals before you're able to decide on just the special things you want to keep as mementos. As time goes by, you will be able to let go of the less important things without it ripping you to pieces. Not everything will forever have the same value for you. You may change in how you feel and find that it comforts instead of hurts to see your subsequent child wearing some of the baby's clothes, or that catching a glimpse of an old familiar shirt on one of your teenagers brings a warm feeling.

Whether you've made changes or haven't been able to make changes, it's okay. There is no rule about when you do it, so don't let well-meaning friends or relatives make you feel guilty because your needs don't meet their timetables. What we would like to suggest to you is, though there is no rules about when you do it, that you have as a goal eventually making the changes, otherwise the room and things become a shrine, and if you have surviving children or a spouse that may find it very difficult to live in this atmosphere forevermore. If they could be honest with you, many would tell you they don't want their dead sibling closed up in his or her room, as though their dying was something for which they're being punished. Instead, bring the record player and records into the den, or use the backpack and tent or whatever, because it comforts them to feel that their sibling has once again become a part of the family and not relegated to "the room".

I don't think I know of anyone who hasn't kept some belongings of their dead child, so that must be normal. What we learn after the death is that life is tenuous at best, and rather than hanging on to unchanged rooms, try to value the important people who are left in this life, be they family or friends, and savor them along with the memories of your dead child. For when all is said and done, those memories are truly the important part of what you have left of your child. That's a truth that doesn't need changing.

Mary Cleckley TCF, Atlanta, GA

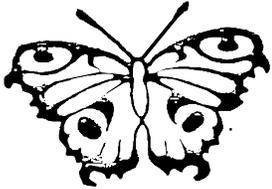


**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Chapter Leaders
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343

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**...A bereavement organization
For parents, siblings & families
We offer friendship, love and understanding
We talk, we listen, we share, we care**

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2007