



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

DECEMBER 2016

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 Founders 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

- Dec 1 General Sharing
- Dec 11 World Wide Candle Lighting
(see page 3)
Collection of gifts for First Step (under privileged children.) (see page 3)
- Jan 5 General Sharing

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

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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.

INSIDE VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER

NEW PEOPLE

Barbara Cohen, son *Mark* (60)
Fran & Laura Lincicome, *Daniel* (24) son of *Fran*, and brother of *Laura*
Eileen & Chris McKeown, son *Eric* (20)

REFRESHMENTS

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.

Carol Bailey in memory of my son, *Matthew* on his anniversary 12/21.
Nina Bernstein in memory of my son, *Andrew* on his birthday 10/12.

LOVE GIFTS

Thelma Miller in loving memory of my son, *Lowell Bruce Miller*; my sister, *Geraldine Weiner*; my husband, *S. Leonard Miller*; and my niece, *Susan Kramer*, who died recently. My best wishes and love to all.

Marie Schmeltzer in loving memory of my son, *Sam "Sonny" Schmeltzer*.

Priscilla EnochsThoroughgood in loving memory of my daughter, *Kendra Enochs* on her birthday December 5th. Forever in my heart and thoughts.

This publication of the **TCF Valley Forge Chapter Newsletter** is funded by the **Steven Schneibolk Memorial Fund**.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

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

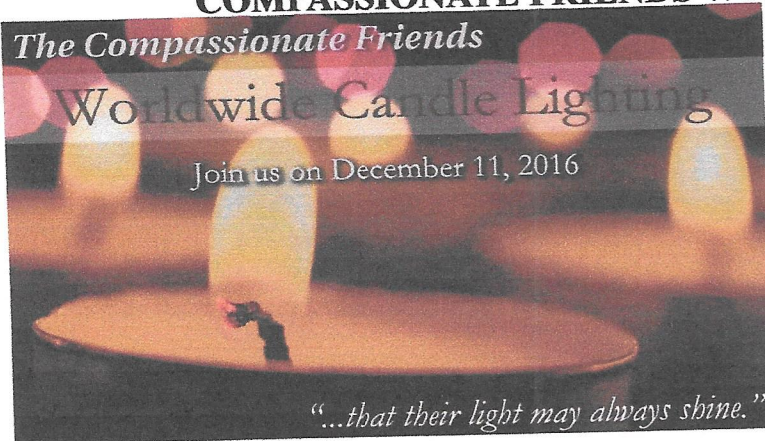
We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know "**We need not walk alone**".

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@tcfvalleyforge.org

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 18th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a candle lighting remembrance service on December 11th at 2 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the Founders Hall. (same place as our monthly sharing secessions are held). We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to everyone, including those who do not drive at night. We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7PM. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children & siblings who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.

Guest speaker will be Dr. Yvonne Kaye, who is an international speaker with a wide range of subjects, including post traumatic stress disorder and bereavement, specializing in the death of children. She is a certified Thanatologist, veteran radio talk show host, author, and Interfaith Minister, believing in the power of the human spirit. She is a strong advocate of humor and spirituality, a Spiritual Coach and her philosophy is "Laughter is the miracle healer". Dr. Kaye received the prestigious Matty Muir Award 2005 for work with victims of crime. She has given much support for many years to TCF. Dr. Kaye has often been a Keynote speaker at Regional, National and International TCF Conferences. She has been a long time friend of the Valley Forge Chapter.

GIFTS FOR UNDER PRIVILEGED CHILDREN

FIRST STEP is a program of Chester County for under privileged/handicapped children. For many years our Chapter has collected gifts for them. We will do so again this year, at our December 1st meeting & December 11th World Wide Candle Lighting Service Program. The children are between the ages of 2 and 6. Both clothing and toys are welcome gifts. It is very rewarding to remember your child, by showing love to these children. Please add a tag that states suggested age and sex. You may sign it, "from your friend", or your child or sibling's name. This may be the only gift the child will receive. We appreciate your participation in this worthy cause.

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.**

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* 12/17
Tom & Kathy Biggar, granddaughter *Ava Nobles* 12/13
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* 12/20
Ben & Cathy Breskman, son *Brian* 12/11
Libby Cavallaro, sister *Theresa* 12/29
Becky & Frank Clark, son *Pat* 12/16
Benjamin E. Cohen, daughter *Donna Lynne Cohen* 12/9
Anita Conway, son *Daniel* 12/9
Jean & Bill Cotter, son *Patrick Cotter* 12/20
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* 12/23
Janet Cozzone, daughter *Jesika* 12/5
Adriene & Peter De Moerloose, daughter *Olivia* 12/30
Tom & Marge Del Rosario, son *Dominic* 12/14
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *Kenneth* 12/15
Joseph & Patsy Dooley, son *Peter J. Dooley* 12/22
Justine Ellinger, daughter *Keira Ellinger* 12/11
Bob & Dena Filipone, daughter *Denise* 12/13
Bonnie Gardner, daughter *Michelle* 12/16
Suze Goldberg, uncle *Neal* 12/14
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* 12/2
Ginger Jarrett, daughter *Adrienne* 12/5
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* 12/11
Joan Kellett, son *Daniel Thomas Kellett* 12/7
Wendy Kuhn, brother *David* 12/19
Teresa & Bill Lattanze, daughter *Jodi Noell Lattanze* 12/19
Frank & Laura Lincicome, son *Daniel* 12/22
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael* 12/4
Pat Miller, son *Nathan* 12/2
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* 12/31
Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* 12/2
Bonnie Nimerfroh, son *David* 12/19
enn Nobles, daughter *Ava Ruth Marie* 12/13
Maurice & Ruth Onraet, son *Thomas* 12/19
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Martin A Peters* 12/8

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS continued

Elise Rice, husband *James W. Rice, Sr.* 1/27
Maureen & David Rich, daughter *Mallory Kirby Rich* 12/4
Thelma Rosen, brother *David Beeler* 12/24
Patti & Glen Smith, son *Chris* 12/30
E. Pearl & Ernest Smith, son *Tony* 12/23
Eileen Smith, son *Craig* 12/17
John & Rose Stanley, daughter *Susan Stanley* 12/4
Ronda Stansbery, daughter *Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman* 12/22
Luanne Stefler, grandson *Jordyn* 12/25
Edward & Mary Stimson, son *Keith Stimson* 12/29
Priscilla Thoroughgood, daughter *Kendra Enochs* 12/5
Judy Tomarelli, son Daniel *Robert Tomarelli* 12/19
Jackie Ward, grandson *Anthony* 12/1
Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan* 12/28

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* - 12/21
Carole Bailey, son *Matthew J. Bailey* - 12/21
Richard & Jo Bewley, son *Kevin Bewley* - 12/29
Lisa Bledy, sister Danielle *Bledy* - 12/4
David Bonga, daughter *Amanda* - 12/31
Catherine Chan, son *Chanlan Lee* - 12/19
Becky & Frank Clark, son *Pat* - 12/4
Tracy & Mike Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* - 12/5
Martin & Mary Conway, son *Neal* - 12/10
Carole and Kevin Creighton, son *Ryan Kent Creighton* - 12/6
Reno & Bonnie Crescimone, son *Jonathan* - 12/21
Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* - 12/19
Helen Deery, son *Ronald J. Deery, Jr.* - 12/20
Susan Dehlinger, daughter *Amy M. Dehlinger* - 12/7
Antoinette & John DiDonato, son *Kenneth* - 12/5
Maureen & Jim Fleagle, son *Brian* - 12/11
Giuliana Hilend, son *Patrick Andrew Hilend* - 12/10
Michelle Hillstrom, daughter *Jen* - 12/20
Anthony & Carol Iacobucci, son *Anthony Iacobucci* - 12/13
Enid M. Irizarry, daughter *Lisette M. Molina* - 12/25
Carl and Dorothy Johnson-Speight, daughter *Carlena Speight* - 12/13
son *Khaaliq Jabbar Johnson* - 12/6
Millie Jones, grandson *Shawn Dian* - 12/23
Joan Kingslake, daughter *Ann Kingslake Woods* - 12/31
Al & Sue Koenig, daughter *Emily Grace Koenig* - 12/11

SHARED THOUGHTS ON PLANNING AHEAD FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be a dreaded time for bereaved families. The season we used to anticipate with joy, can now almost be poignant while we are grieving. The thought of decorating, shopping, food preparation, and entertaining can be overwhelming to us. Grief drains our energy as we deal with our emotions, we can barely care for our daily needs. It is important to not shelve our grief during this season. We need to express our pain, tears, rage, and the additional loneliness that holiday nostalgia brings.

It is best to plan ahead and decide what you and your immediate family can manage this holiday season. This is often determined by the size and ages of the surviving family, particularly when there are small children still at home. Holiday time is usually hard, no matter where we are or what we do. The one gift we want so desperately, can't be had. Many keep the traditions of the season. We had a 10 year old and many teen-agers at home, we kept most of our traditions, even though it was very painful. But, it did help to make the succeeding holidays easier, we feel we made the right decision for us. Many find going away to be a better choice. Only you, your mate, and children can choose what is best for you. If you wish to not be with extended family and friends, put the blame where it belongs. Tell them your grief is too painful to celebrate, and perhaps after you have done much healing, you can again share the holidays. To refuse invitations can be difficult, but it is your decision. It is better to be honest (even if you shed tears while sharing your feelings), than to let anger erupt inappropriately because you are stifling your tears and holding in your feelings.

Many want to support us through our grief, and would feel honored if we would suggest ways they can help during the holidays, it is very satisfying to feel needed. The only thing many know about grief is what we tell them, we know much about grief had to be learned first hand. The non-bereaved often feel inadequate in supporting us, we need to direct them, whether it be to listen or give us privacy. Most find it easier to be of help physically. Holiday time is a good season to give a list of chores to others who want to help, and in turn it is very rewarding for them.

You will survive the holidays, each hurdle you conquer will give you a little added strength. The anticipation of holidays can be worse than the day itself. This holiday may not be the best you have had, but it will probably be the best you can have with the circumstances you are dealing with.

Each of our children and siblings were unique, we learned a lot about life because of them. Their personalities brought a lot of fun, and love into molding our life. Those who did not know them have missed a great deal. Perhaps, that is why we have the need to tell others how special our children and siblings were, and what an honor it is to have known them.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

**We wish all of you a very meaningful Holiday,
May love be what you remember the most.**

Some Common Thoughts Following the Death of Your Child

- It is not uncommon to feel bitterness or a sense of injustice when one loses a child. So if you find yourself thinking, *Why me?*, *Why my child?*, *Why our family?*, You are in good company.
- Some parents describe “an irrational sense of self-blame” following the death of a child. I never was able to figure out what a rational sense of self-blame might be. But I do know that many of us blame ourselves. We replay the what-ifs of our child’s life and death a thousand times a day. Almost always self-blame is misplaced.
- Grief over the loss of a child lasts longer than any other kind. It heals more slowly and causes the most monumental disruption for those who survive. This is because a child is a part of what psychologists call our internal psychological structure - meaning that in a way, part of the parent dies too.
- Most experts believe that loss and helplessness are the greatest tests any human can face. A child’s death is off the charts in both categories.
- You may be strong, smart, and highly resilient. But nothing can prepare you for the loss of a child.
- One reason the loss feels so enormous is that a child’s death violates an implicit generational contract that our own children will survive us.
- A child’s death also challenges the fundamental instinct of parents to protect their child. That is what we are supposed to do, isn’t it? To make the world safe? The feeling that we have failed to do so can haunt us, compounding our sadness.
- In an era of medical miracles, we are less culturally conditioned to expect a child’s death than in previous generations. On the contrary, the prevailing assumption is that science and technology can and will work wonders.
- Some experts estimate that in the face of a child’s death two years is a reasonable grieving period. Others double that figure. The truth is, it takes as long as it takes - sometimes a whole lifetime. But if you are lucky, the grief will transmute. Even its physical properties will transform. Its weighty presence abates. The grief becomes gentler - less terrifying - and sometimes, paradoxically, rather sweet.

*Taken from **After the Darkest Hour the Sun will Shine Again**
By Elizabeth Mehren*

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

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that come along." The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must try to do the thing you think you cannot do.

Eleanor Roosevelt

HANUKKAH

At this season of lights,
 We remember the light you brought
 into our lives:
 The light of your laughter
 The light of your wit and intelligence
 The light of your love
 May the time not be distant when the
 memory of these lights
 Will illumine our hearts and minds
 And eradicate the darkness therein.
Stephanie Hesse TCF Rockland Co. NY

CHANUKAH

Chanukah is here.
 I see the candles glow,
 red, pink and blue.
 But you're not here to
 see their pretty shadows.
 I shop for gifts.
 And this year, again, once more,

I won't be in a quandary
 of what to buy.
 I give you my love,
 My precious son,
 for that is eternal.
 And once again.
 it will have to do.

Ginette Kravet Central Jersey TCF

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels and
 stars and beloved carols ... beyond the presents,
 the shopping, the baking and cooking ,, beyond
 all of these sights and sounds of Christmas ...
 beyond all of these ... there is **HOPE**.

HOPE ... for the bereaved parent, even at
 Christmas, one of the most, if not the most,
 painful times of the year, there is an essence of
HOPE . **Hope** ... it is **HOPE** that sustains us
 through the days of grief and anger and
 frustration and loneliness.

The **HOPE** is that someday the pain of the
 deaths of our children will be eased. The **HOPE**
 is that someday our smiles will be real. The
HOPE is that once again we will laugh and love
 and cry completely without fear and hollowness.
 It is the **HOPE** that some day we can remember
 our children with a tenderness merely tinged
 with sorrow and not overwhelmed with it.

So it is that for each of you, I offer **HOPE** ...
 peace, compassion, love, sympathy,
 understanding, sharing, and listening. In the
 sharing of our grief with one another and in the
 emotional support we give to one another, we
 receive and understand all of these gifts.

Wabash Valley Chapter / TCF Terre Haute, IN

Those we hold dear never truly leave us. They
 live on in the kindness they showed, and the
 love they brought into our lives.

Isabel Norton, Central Iowa Newsletter

Time does not really heal a broken heart; it only
 teaches a person how to live with it.

By A. L. Sheppard, Jr., Fort Worth

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

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, a hug, and wish you peace.

Marie and Ken Hofmockel



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
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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