



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## DECEMBER 2018

### 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. For information please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

#### Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

Dec 6, 2018 General Sharing

Dec 9, 2018 Candle Lighting Service (see page 3)

Jan 3, 2019 General Sharing

July 19 - 21, 2019 TCF National Conference  
Philadelphia, PA

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

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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**

**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.

**Rhonda & Frank Gomez** in honor of our son *Frankie*

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**LOVE GIFTS**

**Nina Bernstein** in loving memory of my son, *Andrew* on his birthday.

**Michael Gormish** in loving memory of my brother *Douglas Moyer*.

**Carl & Catherine Helwig** in loving memory of our son, **Michael**

**Joyce & Vernon Kaiser, Jr.** in loving memory of our son, *Brian*, on his 45th birthday.

Always in our prayers, forever in our hearts. Miss you, love you. Always, Mom & Dad

**Rose Yanni** in loving memory of my wonderful nephew, *David Yanni*, on his 56th birthday. *David* is still very much missed by all his family.

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER**

The time has come for us (Marie & Ken Hofmockel) to pass the Newsletter Editor position on to someone else. This will be the last newsletter issue, that we publish.

The Newsletter Editors can be an individual, or a couple. Fresh ideas and different styles are welcome, as long as the basic rules set by TCF National are not violated. It is the willingness to reach out to the newly bereaved that is important.

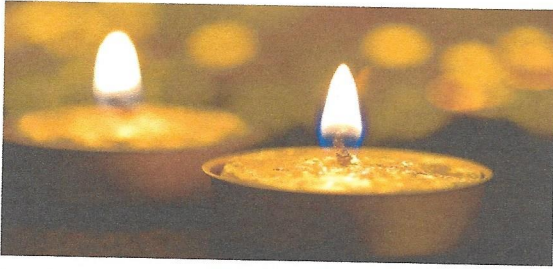
The best part of healing is reinvesting by giving back. It is a tremendous reward to give hope to the newly bereaved and see their fragmented lives find meaning in living again. Please volunteer, it can be very healing.

Rhonda & Frank Gomez  
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**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 22nd 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 9th 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 - JOE PURIFICO**

Joe Purifico became a member of The Compassionate Friends upon the passing of his only child 16 years ago. It was his attendance at TCF meetings that incredibly began to start the journey to the healing process that all of us need as members of the club that no one wanted to join.

Since we have all experienced our losses in different ways, Joe has been a friend to and a mentor for many families that have lost their precious children, as a way to help him deal with his own loss. He has also lectured at many area high schools on a substance abuse program entitled "Never To Late".

His message of how to accept the reality of our tragedies, begin the healing process and move forward, creating positive endeavors from the most devastating emotional crises that we as parents can experience, will be the topic of his discussion.

Joe is a local business attorney helping entrepreneurs to start , buy, sell , finance and grow their companies.

**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 6th meeting & December 9th 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.



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October 1, 2018

To: The Compassionate Friends Chapter Leaders

I would like to introduce myself, I am Betty and I am the co-chapter leader of the Brandywine Hundred Chapter in Wilmington, Delaware. I am Kara Lyn's mom. Pam is a member of the Chatham Area TCF in Chatham Township, New Jersey. Pam is Paula's mom.

We have volunteered to co-chair the Butterfly Boutique at the upcoming 2019 National Conference, "Hope Rings in Philadelphia", that will be held in Philadelphia, Pa. on July 19 - 21, 2019 and we need your help.

We would like you to please put this Request for Donations in your next newsletter and as often as you can for the next few months and to announce this to your membership.

In order to be successful and raise money... we need donations of items to sell. We would like to have new and gently used pre-owned items. We need anything that you have purchased or were given that has angels, butterflies, hearts, hummingbirds, dragonflies or any other appropriate subject matter. It could be jewelry (pins earrings, rings necklace, ankle bracelet) or jewelry box ..maybe a scarf or a tote bag...a candle or coasters...could be a Christmas ornament or decoration...kitchen or bath towel (new of course), framed pictures, artwork or handmade items...Seraphim angels or Susan Lordi Willow Tree, Butterflies on anything ..a chair or lamp...a night light. or magnet ..note paper, a pen, something you may have purchased at the national conference and never used...even heart things...wallet, a watch. At the national convention they even sold items that did not have butterflies or hearts like Coach wallets and Vera Bradley items...so any and all items that can be sold would be greatly appreciated.

If you'd like a donation receipt, please let us know. TCF is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization.

Please help by asking at your meeting, since we do get different things from different people. If you could collect the items and send them to Betty Valentine (her address is at the top of the page) so that they can be sorted, cleaned, marked for sale and listed. Give us a call if you have any questions. We, at TCF would be so appreciative.

Sincerely,

Betty Valentine, Co-chair and  
 Pam Bennett-Santoro, Co-chair  
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**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:

**DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

- Chris Aiello, brother *Louis (lou)* 12/24  
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  
Catherine Chan, son *Chanlan Lee* 11/27  
Becky & Frank Clark, son *Pat* 12/16  
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 (Kenny)* 12/15  
Joseph & Patsy Dooley, son *Peter J. Dooley* 12/22  
Ed & Sue Duffy, son *Peter* 12/12  
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* 12/28  
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  
Sue, Dave, Dan, and Lauren McCarthy, son and brother *Brian McCarthy* 12/25  
Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael* 12/4  
Pat Miller, son *Nathan* 12/2  
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* 12/31  
Audrey Morasco, son *Christopher Morasco* 2/22  
Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* 12/2  
Bonnie Nimerfroh, son *David* 12/19  
Jenn Nobles, daughter *Ava Ruth Marie* 12/13  
Maurice & Ruth Onraet, son *Thomas* 12/19  
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Martin A. Peters* 12/8











## SHARED THOUGHTS ON THE HOLIDAYS

This time of year that we have always faced with joy and excitement, frequently turns to fear for those facing their first Christmas, Chanukah, or whatever your choice of holiday is (or perhaps your second year, that still seems like the first). The tinsel, holly, music, and joy around us seem overwhelming.

Remember, we are grieving people, and are very limited to what we can give. To reduce pressure on ourselves, it helps to be realistic and don't over commit. Failing to follow through adds to our depression and lowers our self-esteem.

It is important to take time out to grieve and express our emotions, which can relieve a lot of stress. We have a right to mourn even though those around us are celebrating a joyous occasion, and those around us have a right to be joyous. When analyzing our depression over the holidays, we have to admit we are feeling so low because of missing those wonderful times, which we too, enjoyed. For now, it may be necessary to separate ourselves from the celebration, and concentrate on the greatest gift we have ever given to our child, grandchild, or sibling (the gift of love). That gift can still be given to our loved ones. For those of us who have a religious belief, it may be a time to reflect on our faith.

Shopping for family and friends sometimes creates a feeling of guilt, because we cannot buy for the missing family member. It helped me to begin by treating myself to seven new ceramic Christmas balls with each child's name and birthdate. I did not put Doug's death date on his, for it is his life I want to remember. I also bought a wreath for my front door, that I planned to take to the cemetery the week before Christmas. This made me feel that I could bring part of his home to him. Each year I purchase a new decoration for our home in his remembrance. I don't announce it to anyone, but I know why it's there. These things help to give the feeling that he is not left out. This may not be good for everyone. You may want to find "your special remembrance" project to get you through.

It is important for us to discuss plans with other family members in our home. Firstly, to know what they need to get themselves through, and secondly, for you not to bear all the stress of decision making. Be flexible, there is no right or wrong rules, you can run away, or stay at home. Some stay at home and make changes. Others stay at home with no changes, and face it head on. (This was the best for me, because I have six surviving children) Sometimes well meaning non-bereaved individuals want us to lay our grief aside during the holidays. They don't understand our need to grieve. It is very appropriate to say, "I have to do this holiday my way, for I think this is best for me".

In my early stages of grief, I felt there would never be another happy holiday. The pain softens, and though it is different, I look forward to and enjoy holidays. I cannot expect you to believe this can happen to you, for I did not believe others before me. We must remember, even though our holiday is not good, it may be the best we can have, given the situation we are in. No matter where we spend our holiday our deceased loved one's memories will be with us. May you find hope to believe your holidays can be good again.

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



### **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're 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**

TAKE THE TIME . . . TO HURT, TO CRY. . .

Wordless and worldless -- Endless and forever, grief goes on --  
It takes the best -- And leaves the rest an empty shell -- Life is Hell.

David was dead four months when I wrote that in my journal. Time is my enemy. As I envisioned the future of my life, I saw only a vast expanse of desert - dry, parched, and empty.

It is now a year and a half since David's death, and I recognize that time has become my friend. Now, when I look to the future, I see hills and valleys - struggles, to be sure, but, also, moments spent at the summit. What has happened? Time is healing.

Take the time . . .

**To hurt . . .** The pain is great and the temptation to run away is great. But, there is no avoiding, no escaping the hard feelings. If you cover them over, they only re-surface later in a potentially more destructive way.

**To cry . . .** It may feel like once started, you can never stop. But you have every reason to cry, and when you have cried enough, you will stop.

**To "fall apart." . . .** If you have a broken leg, you would not expect yourself to function at full capacity right away. Your wound is much greater - you have a broken heart. Confusion, inability to concentrate, lethargy, imagined glimpses of your dead child are a normal part of the grieving process and do not mean that you are going crazy.

**To be "selfish." . . .** Mourning is an egocentric time, a time for turning inward and introspection.

**To "identify" . . .** and seek out resources in your environment that can help: friends, clergy, Compassionate Friends, a counselor. Talk to them.

Having done all that - having lingered in the valley of the shadow - it is time to begin the climb out.

Take the time . . .

**To engage again** in activities that were once pleasurable. They may hold no joy the first few times; someday they will and that will be all right.

**To laugh without guilt.** Savor the good moments in the day, brief though they may be. Through your child, you can re-discover the beauty of a sunset.

**To care for your health.** Grieving is a physio-, as well, as psycho-logical stress. Your body needs protection.

**To be patient.** Wanting to live again and learning to live again takes time. The path out of the other side of the valley is steep, and we all often stumble. But with time - time spent doing the work of grief - you can find the path to a world made richer by your love.

*Bronna Romaoff, PHD - Albany, NY, TCF*



## *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.**

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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