

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month, at 7:45 PM (ending at 9:30 PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Founders Hall, Valley Forge Road and Henderson Rds., King of Prussia, PA.

For info call Rhonda (484) 919-0820

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of Interest.

Meeting - 12/1/2022

Next Meeting - 1/5/2023

Reminder — The Candle Lighting Service will be December 11, 2022 at 2 PM. This is a remembrance service for our children, grandchildren, and siblings. It will be at same place as our meeting is held.



December 2022

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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 editor.

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 the 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 Rhonda Gomez

Mission Statement

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild and helps others better assist the grieving family.

NEW FRIENDS

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We all have been in the depths of despair, and offer unconditional love and understanding to all of you, it sometimes takes several meetings to feel the full benefit of group sharing. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love and understanding to all of you.

John Gailey — son, Alex age 19

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.

LOVE GIFTS

Irene Sutton — In honor of Marie Hofmockel. She died on August 3, 2022.

A MOMENT OF HELP

After I lost my son Nino to a drowning accident, a young scientist walked into my office at Denver University. He was always extremely detached in his interactions with people, so I was not surprised that he asked almost casually whether I was feeling better. I could not answer his question, because I had already started to cry. "Would you rather not have had a son at all?" he wanted to know. I shook my head and cried harder. He handed me his handkerchief and said firmly, "I suppose you need to cry yourself well." And without even a hint of emotion, he sat down facing me. In the presence of so much detachment, I managed to recover my "composure." But the visitor took my hand and held it silently, until I began to cry again. Then he said, "Keep crying. You are not well yet." I will not forget this encounter. It told me two things when I very much needed to hear them. First; the expression of grief is necessary. And second; after a great sorrow, we can expect - in time - to be "well" again.

Sascha Wagner

We wish all of you a very meaningful Christmas. May the love and fond memories of your loved ones help you on your journey of grief.

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 Fellowship Hall. (same place as our monthly sharing sessions are held). We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to every one, including those who do not drive at night. We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7 PM. 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. We will have light refreshments after the service!

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.

Anniversaries

Nina Ansel - Jenny - daughter - 12/21
 Eric Archibald - Naroly - daughter - 12/6
 Carole Bailey - Matthew J. Bailey - son - 12/21
 Richard & Jo Bewley - Kevin Bewley - son - 12/29
 Bob & Marge Blasucci - Adam - son - 12/26
 Lisa Bledy - Danielle Bledy - sister - 12/4
 Marbeth Blocklinger - Parker - grandson - 12/13 & Bryam Jr - grandson - 12/13
 Becky & Frank Clark - Pat - son - 12/4
 Tracy & Mike Collins - Krystal Chuck - daughter - 12/5
 Carole and Kevin Creighton - Ryan Kent Creighton - son - 12/6
 Reno & Bonnie Crescimone - Jonathan - son - 12/21
 Bill & Donna Deasey - Michelle Deasey - daughter - 12/19
 Helen Deery - Ronald J. Deery, Jr. - son - 12/20
 Susan Dehlinger - Amy M Dehlinger - daughter - 12/7
 Antoinette & John DiDonato - Kenneth (Kenny) - son - 12/5
 Karen Donaldson - Willow Ann - daughter - 12/28
 Maureen & Jim Fleagle - Brian - son - 12/11
 Lee & Patricia Grossman - Rachel Leah - daughter - 12/5
 Giuliana Hilend - Patrick Andrew Hilend - son - 12/10
 Michelle Hillstrom - Jen - daughter - 12/20
 Enid M. Irizarry - Lisette M. Molina - daughter - 12/25
 Carl and Dorothy Johnson-Speight - Carlana Speight - daughter - 12/13 & Khaaliq Jabbar Johnson - son - 12/6
 Joan Kingslake - Ann Kingslake Woods - daughter - 12/31
 Howard & Stacy Koller - Kaitlin - daughter - 12/18
 Teresa & Bill Lattanze - William Noel Lattanze - son - 12/25
 Barb & Larry Lauchle - Gray - son - 12/18
 Tracy Lukens - Parker - son - 12/13 & Bryam Jr - son - 12/13
 Timothy & Maxine Lurowist - Kristine - daughter - 12/24
 Alfred J. & Joan Michini - Alfred J. Michini, II * - son - 12/14
 Alexandra Milas - Nicholas Stathes - mom's brother - 12/19
 Gerald & Margaret Milice - Gerald Milice - son - 12/11
 Greg and Mary Miller - David - son - 12/3
 Audrey Morasco - Christopher Morasco - son - 12/27
 Carol & Dennis O'Connor - Jack Coladonato - brother - 12/3
 Roy Redman - Linda Inez Redman - daughter - 12/16
 Jill & Richard Reich - Patrick - son - 12/28
 Tony & Toni Riccardi - David Riccardi - son - 12/1
 Marcella Rice - Raymond Anthony Rice - brother - 12/9
 Daune Ring - Chloe - daughter - 12/29

Anniversaries - Cont'd

Margaret & Robert Rooney - Sharon Rooney - daughter - 12/8
 Beth Schad - Gage - son - 12/27
 Art & Carol Silverman - Cheryl Beth Silverman - daughter - 12/16
 Mike & Beverly Smith - Ryan - son - 12/11
 Lisa M. Spinks - Robert - brother - 12/9
 Ronda Stansbery - Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman - daughter - 12/22
 Fred & Irene Sutton - Pearl Collins - mother(Fred) - 12/19
 Frank Yanni - Delores - wife - 12/9

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.

TCF Wabash Valley Chapter, IN

RIVER OF TEARS

Four years gone, my tears still flow
 making a river who's rapids I know.
 Tossing my heart with grief, sorrow,
 regret looking to heaven my heart
 won't forget those Tears
 of Joy
 of Pride
 of Loss
 Crystal Rivulets are prayers, they
 strengthen the bridge
 To the Gate of eternity on God's
 Heavenly Ridge

Rose Cote, TCF Valley Forge, PA

BIRTHDAYS

Eric Archibald - daughter - Naroly - 12/21
 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
 Jean & Bill Cotter - son - Patrick Cotter - 12/20
 Bobbie Coyle - son - Whitney Coyle - 12/23
 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
 Mary Ann Flocco - sister - Barbara - 12/22
 John Gailey - son - Alex - 12/30
 Bonnie Gardner - daughter - Michelle - 12/16
 Suze Goldberg - Uncle - Neal - 12/14
 Mary Green - Paul Green - 12/2
 Jack & Freda Gross - daughter - Linda Joy Gross - 12/28
 Ginger Jarrett - daughter - Adrienne - 12/5
 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
 Fran & Kathy Moran - daughter - Denise Nicole Moran - 12/31
 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
 Maureen & David Rich - daughter - Mallory Kirby Rich - 12/4
 Eileen Smith - son - Craig - 12/17
 E. Pearl & Ernest Smith - son - Tony - 12/23
 John & Rose Stanley - daughter - Susan Stanley - 12/4
 Ronda Stansbery - daughter - Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman - 12/22
 Luanne Stetler - grandson - Jordyn - 12/25
 Edward & Mary Stimson - son - Keith Stimson - 12/29
 Morgan E Taylor - sister - Devan - 12/25
 Brooke Test - sister - Devan - 12/25
 Judy Tomarelli - son - Daniel Robert Tomarelli - 12/19
 Tim and Mary Tuinstra - granddaughter - Sophia Tuinstra - 12/1
 Laura & Leo Weishew - brother - Steven McGowan - 12/28
 John & Ceciia Zisk - son - Jacob - 12/13



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, our child, grandchild, or sibling, the gift of love. That gift can still be given to our loved one. 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.

Marie Hofmockel, TCF Valley Forge, PA

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

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

Tears don't erase all hurt,
Tears don't bring the dead life,
But tears do help to ease the pain.

Philip W. Williams

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.

The Compassionate Friends Credo



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

Valley Forge Chapter
of the Compassionate Friends
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**The
Compassionate
Friends Inc.**

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