



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## FEBRUARY 2017

### 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

Feb 2 General Sharing

March 2 General Sharing

July 28-30 40th TCF National Conference  
"Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope"  
Orlando, FL. (see page 2)

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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[compassionatefriends.org](http://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.

**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.

*Refreshments were supplied by the chapter.*

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**LOVE GIFTS**

**Nina Bernstein**, in loving memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* on his anniversary 2/9.

**Rita Gibbons**, in loving memory of my daughter, *Patricia* on her anniversary 2/1.

**Ken & Marie Hofmockel**, in loving memory of our son, *Douglas* on his anniversary 2/7.

**Tony & Toni Riccardi**, in loving memory of our son, David on his anniversary 12/1.

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

**Robert McCullough**, in loving memory of my daughter, *Caroline Patricia McCullough.*

**CAROLINE**

*Where art thou, my cherub child,  
Who brought to me such joy?*

*Your are in the morning sun,  
In every drop of dew.*

*You give the birds their awesome song,  
Your voice in every tune.*

*You bring the scent,  
To each sweet rose.  
And tend our garden,  
As it grows.*

*You light up the nightly skies,  
Giving stars your twinkling eyes.*

*-Robert McCullough*



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando Florida will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017.

“Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope” is the theme of this year’s event.



**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.**

**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

**Laura Amen, son *R.J. Amen* 2/5**  
**Ann Bruner, sister *Katy Wade* 2/8**  
**Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class* 2/7**  
**Wendy Coleman, daughter *Gabrielle* 2/19**  
**Liz & Scott Conaghan, brother *Jan* 2/6**  
**Jane Cox, son *Bill* 2/21**  
**Bud Cunnane, son *Patrick* 2/14**  
**Jim & Ruth Fairley, son *David Fairley* 2/5**  
**Rochena & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan* 2/21**  
**Charlie & Jill Fick, son *Michael Sternberg* 2/10**  
**Laura Giordano, son *Peter* 2/12**  
**Rhonda and Frank Gomez, brother *Paul* 2/7**  
**Sandra Greenly, son *Michael Greenly* 2/18**  
**Tim & Rosemarie Griffiths, son *Timothy Griffiths* 2/18**  
**Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* 2/16**  
**Lee & Patricia Grossman, daughter *Rachel Leah* 2/2**  
**Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17**  
**Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* 2/14**  
**Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Noreen Schmucker* 2/15**  
**Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* 2/10**  
**Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* 2/10**  
**Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. "Buddy" Hoesch* 2/16**  
**Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* 2/4**  
**Joan Jagers, son *John Costello* 2/17**  
**Deborah Keevill, son *Brandon* 2/23**  
**Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son *Philip V. Kennedy* 2/22**  
**Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son *Edward Kiefski, Jr.* 2/11**  
**Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* 2/10**  
**Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* 2/17**  
**Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* 2/27**  
**Andie Lunkenheimer, brother *Brennan* 2/26**  
**Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* 2/25**  
**Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* 2/25**  
**Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* 2/28**

**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS continued**

**Kathleen Mitchel**, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* 2/19  
**Audrey Morasco**, son *Christopher Morasco* 2/22  
**Mary Mulholland**, son *Joseph McGowan* 2/25  
**John & Mary Ann Murphy**, daughter *Maureen Murphy* 2/13  
**Connie & Richard Nolan**, son *Christopher Nolan* 2/9  
**Emil Nunez**, son *Oliver Nunez* 2/12  
**Robert & Jean Phillips**, son *Robert Phillips* 2/23  
**Carol Phipps**, daughter *Casey* 2/18  
**Joan & Earl Reigel**, daughter *Melissa Reigel* 2/19  
**Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert**, mother (Bubbles) *Theresa Volpe* 2/27  
**Tony & Toni Riccardi**, son *David Riccardi* 2/17  
**Barbara Rossman**, daughter *Kickole Lyn* 2/13  
**Linda Sandlin**, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17  
**Rosemarie Scott-Griffiths**, stepson *Timothy F. Griffiths* 2/18  
**Frank and Kay Shinnners** , son *Erik Shinnners* 2/22  
**Felicia Skalecki**, *Zuko Iroh McNulty* 2/4  
**Janemarie Smith**, daughter *Beth Jovanovic* 2/6  
**Gary Snyder**, daughter *Alyse* 2/16  
**Margaret & Wade Stallard**, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* 2/21  
**Elaine & Joe Stillwell**, son *Denis E. O'Connor, III* 2/4  
**Robert & Nancy Thompson**, friend *J. Peter Adler* 2/5  
**Esperanza & Libardo Toro**, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro* 2/9  
**Barbara Torrens**, brother *Robert Birmele* 2/18  
**Mek Wagner**, daughter *Paige* 2/1  
**Henry & Elizabeth Weaver**, grandson *Donald Smith, Jr.* 2/24  
**John & Linda Wilson**, son *Sean* 2/18  
**Gisela Witte**, son *Bruce G Edlund* 2/24

**FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

**Gary & Phyllis Adler**, son *Matthew* - 2/18  
**Marilynn Anton**, cousin/godmother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7  
**Nina Bernstein**, son *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9  
**Donna & Gregory Class**, daughter *Megan Maria Class* - 2/9  
**Lisa Connolly**, daughter *Elyce Pindjak* - 2/10  
**Janet Cozzone**, daughter *Jesika* - 2/19  
**Allison Crowder**, daughter *Amber* - 2/21  
**Linda Cymbala**, son *Nicholas Cymbala* - 2/5  
**Emilie Degville**, daughter *Madeline* - 2/8  
**Jennifer Dixon**, son *Graham* - 2/14  
**Harold & Marcia Epstein**, grandson *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9



**FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED**

Danielle Evelyn, son *Samir* - 2/12  
Rita Gibbons, daughter *Patricia Gibbons* - 2/1  
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* - 2/25  
Frank Harms, son *Tyler* - 2/16  
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* - 2/24  
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* - 2/24  
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7  
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* - 2/27  
Ginger Jarrett, daughter *Adrienne* - 2/4  
Jack & Stacy Kabic, daughter *Brithy* - 2/3  
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* - 2/16  
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Michael* - 2/2  
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* - 2/7  
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* - 2/5  
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner* - 2/10  
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* - 2/13  
Sue Lawlor, son *Jim* - 2/17  
Janet Leflar, son *Scott* - 2/22  
Mary Mac Farland, son *Marc* - 2/12  
Carl & Josie Malitsky, daughter *Cynthia Malitsky* - 2/8  
James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son *Scott Mattiford* - 2/26  
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* - 2/17  
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* - 2/11  
Alexandra Milas, mom's sister *Demitra Vallianos* - 2/17  
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* - 2/20  
Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* - 2/5  
Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* - 2/23  
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, husband *Dick Miller* - 2/8  
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* - 2/27  
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* - 2/3  
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell* - 2/2  
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* - 2/14  
Kathy Nicholson, son *Frank* - 2/3  
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II* - 2/29  
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey* - 2/16  
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, son *Thomas Reinert, Jr.* - 2/19  
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* - 2/3  
Lois Robinson, son *Randy* - 2/1  
Pamela Schneibolk, brother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7  
Priscilla Shober, son *Jeffrey R. Shober* - 2/2  
Felicia Skalecki, *Zuko Iroh McNulty* - 2/4

## FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

**Melissa Smith**, daughter *Ava* - 2/5

**Penny & Steve Stanaitis**, daughter *Mikayla Faith* - 2/20

**Luanne Stefler**, grandson *Jordyn* - 2/25

**Ellen & Frank Svitek**, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* - 2/9

**Mary Ellen Swider**, daughter *Kelly Swider* - 2/8

**Elaine & Tim Thomas**, son *Seth Peterson* - 2/9

**Marilyn Toole**, son *Ted Toole* - 2/26

**Ann VanLandingham**, daughter-in-law *Rita VanLandingham* - 2/12

**Laura & Leo Weishew**, brother *Steven McGowan* - 2/2

**Kathryn & Pat White**, son *Steven White* - 2/9

### THE MAZE OF GRIEF

I've heard many bereaved parents say – and have said it myself – that when their child died their life turned upside down. Everything becomes mixed up; we are in unfamiliar territory. Vainly we seek for the familiar, for “normalcy”, for something to hold on to. Sometimes we even seem to lose our faith, as we may feel that God has let us down. We seek to reorient ourselves to our new surroundings.

This process of reorientation is called grieving. It may be like feeling our way through a dark labyrinth. Many times we come to dead ends and may have to feel our way back to a broader way. In this dark maze of grief we seek for someone to guide us. Those closest to us are no help. They too are lost in this labyrinth, searching for a way out, an escape from the pain. But all the avenues of escape – sleep, drugs, work, alcohol, avoidance – only leads us deeper into the maze where we feel even more disoriented and lost.

Conversely, the best way out of the labyrinth is through the pain. And the best guide is another bereaved parent, one who has walked the dark maze and knows all about the blind alleys, the dead ends and the false promises of escape. The best way out is through talking; telling your story again and again to a friend who will listen, not judge you, and understand. One who will not tell you to “forget about your child and get on with your life,” or “keep busy and don't think about it,” or that you “should be over it.” A friend who will let you say your child's name, cry an ocean of tears and say all those “crazy” things that you think about after your child dies. In this way you become reoriented to this new life without the physical presence of your child – although he/she is always with you in your heart and memory.

This is what Compassionate Friends is all about. Parents and siblings who are further along in their grief, reaching back and helping newly bereaved parent and sibling find their way through the maze of grief. Reach out and take a hand...you need not walk alone. Peace,

*Helen Bash*



## SHARED THOUGHTS ON TEACHING GRIEF WITH LOVE

Sometimes society sets an unacceptable length of time for our grief. It is very difficult for those who have not experienced the loss of a child or sibling to know the depth of despair we must go through. They don't want our pain to become their pain, so they try to get us to concentrate on happier thoughts to ease their uncomfortable feelings. Frequently they are being all they can be to us, they are not capable of knowing our needs. We don't know how to help ourselves, so it is unfair to expect friends and families to know the right thing to say and do. Perhaps, we should review our responses prior to our loss. Did we know what was appropriate, or did we too, try to do things to make them "get on with their life"?

Perhaps, it is our responsibility to teach the world about grief. But it must be done in a very positive manner, to be properly received. It is very important to thank those who "allow us to grieve", and for us to express the need we have to do so. Many times friends and families are very frustrated, because they don't know how to help us.

The Compassionate Friends has taught me to be honest, to express my feelings, taking as much time as needed to grieve, speak of my deceased child without apologizing, knowing it is all right to be mad, sad, or glad. Just knowing all feelings are normal, in this very abnormal situation, has contributed much to my healing.

After 30 years, I have built a new world that is tolerable and livable. This world includes all the memories of Doug, there is never a day that passes that I don't remember and speak of him. The memories are fresh, but most times these are pleasant memories of his life, that lasts for moments or minutes, and bring pleasure. I don't have the all consumed raw grief I once knew, and which dominated my life. For me, the healing has come through the freedom of grieving, which I have learned from those before me.

We have learned much about grief, and it needs to be taught to others outside of The Compassionate Friends. You are the experts, you have been there. Teach it with love and not anger, and it will be much better received. It is much more affective to say what you need, rather than condemn for what you did not receive. We at Compassionate Friends treat one another with much love, and we know it works. We should extend that treatment to those we meet outside our group.

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

## **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



**A SIBLING SPEAKS OUT**

What happens to the children when a Brother or sister dies? In some ways it is a very different experience from that which parents go through, while in others it is very much the same. Part of the reason for the difference is that the child who has died has a unique relationship with each family member. Part of the reason for the similarity is that all have suffered a loss.

One of the strongest desires expressed by siblings is that they are much more likely to want to return to a normal routine. They want to return to school fairly quickly and to go out with their friends. They want their parents to stop crying, not because they don't care but because they do care and want to see the hurt stop. Just because a child wants to go to a movie doesn't mean he isn't grieving. I think that children are much less exposed to socially "appropriate" behavior after someone has died and may do things that do not fit into an "appropriate" role.

Another strong feeling I see is that of guilt. As much as parents know about their children, there are some things they will never know. A child's private thoughts, or an exchange between children, may never come to the parents attention. The source of child's guilt is frequently the result of an argument, a hastily shouted "drop dead," or a similar fleeting thought. These incidents come back to haunt children, as though one such incident had something to do with the death.

There are a few more concerns that may develop. One is how to take over for the dead child--for example, the household chores that were always done by him or her, but that now have to be done by someone else. Related to this concern is a situation in which a child always shared a particular activity simply because the sibling did it too. After the death, the surviving sibling may feel compelled to continue the activity, because to give it up would be to take away a reminder of the dead sibling. Another concern is that whatever happened to the brother or sister may happen to the survivor. This is particularly acute if the sibling who died was older. As the child approaches the age of the sibling when he or she died, a feeling of anxiety may develop. Many children realize this fear to be groundless but find themselves wondering if they will survive. Consequently, birthdays are often occasions with unexpressed conflicts.

Children also share some of their parents' feelings: the loneliness, the looking for comfort, the feeling that no one else really knows what they're going through. They also share unanswerable questions:

"If I could have. . . ?" and "What if...?"

A child's life is changed forever when a brother or sister dies. If I could advise parents, it would be to say, "Children do not grieve the same way as parents do because of different relationships. Keeping these differences in perspective will help you understand why children sometimes do the things they do. It helps to consider a child's point of view when you are hurting so much. During such an emotionally draining time as grieving, don't leave anything to chance, don't assume anything. Making sure you and your children are aware of each other's feelings will mean less confusion, less tension, more sharing, and more growing together as a family."

*Julie Peterson* TCF, Pawtucket, RI

Astronomical...

A word that can describe  
Events of the solar system,  
Galaxies and planets.

Astronomical...to describe  
A hugh vast dark space.

Astronomical...  
When I think of how  
Your loss has impacted my life.

Astronomical grief  
When I see these wonders  
And know  
You're gone.

Astronomical...  
Vast emptiness and tears for stars.

*Jamie Cote Weaver*  
*TCF Valley Forge, PA*

**SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH GRIEF**

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We do need the help of relatives and friends, and may need the help of Professional Counseling. At the same time, it is important for us to make the effort to help ourselves. Remember, that a lot of energy will be used for healing. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of “LOVE THY NEIGHBOR” - we forget the part - “AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF”. Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief has it's unique side. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

1. **Go Gently**. Don't rush too much. Your body needs energy for repair.
2. Don't take on new responsibilities right away. Don't over-extend yourself. **Keep decision making to a minimum**.
3. Accept help and support when offered.
4. Ask for help. Our family and friends can't read our minds. It is very important to find someone who cares, understands, and with whom you may talk freely. It's okay to need comforting.
5. Seek the support of others...Invite a relative/friend for dinner or overnight. Also, consider meeting new people.
6. Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.
7. Lean **into** the pain. It cannot be outrun. Let the grief/healing process run its full course.
8. Through this emotional period, it is okay to feel depressed. Crying does make you feel better.
9. If Sundays, Holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
10. Seek the help of a **qualified** Counselor or Clergy if grief is unresolved.
11. Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea and colas.
12. Good nutrition is important to help the healing process. (Decrease junk food and try to eat a balanced meal)
13. Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling/thinking. Hopefully, when you re-read it later, you will see that you are getting better.
14. **Read** -- there are many helpful books on grief. If grief is understood, it is a little easier to handle. A little less frightening.
15. Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.) It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and may aid sleep.

**Continued on page 11**



16. Begin towards building a pleasant time with family and friends. Don't feel guilty if you have a good time. Your loved one would want you to be happy.
17. It's OK to be angry. You may be angry at yourself, God, the one who died or just in general. Don't push it down—let it out. (Hit a pillow, scream, exercise, hit a punching bag, etc.)
18. Grief is sometimes an ambush. It comes and goes and takes TIME. Be kind to yourself.
19. Do things a little differently, yet try not to make a lot of changes. This sounds like a contradiction but it is not.
20. Plan new interest. Join a class, read, learn something new. Rediscover old interests, friends, activities.
21. Plan things to which you can look forward - a trip, visit, lunch with a friend. You can start building memories for tomorrow.
22. Find quotes/posters/poems that are helpful to you and post them where you can see them.
23. Talk to the one who died - out loud if you want.
24. Other ideas: take a hot relaxing bath; bask in the sun; take time for yourself (movie, theater, dinner). Be good to yourself.
25. Do something for someone else. Join a volunteer or support group. Helping others does much to ease the pain.
26. Have the courage to work through your grief.
27. Remember you will be better. Hold on to HOPE. Some days you just seem to exist, but better days will be back.
28. Simply stated, put balance in your life: PRAY, REST, WORK, AND PLAY.

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*Author Unknown*

*God grant me serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
and Wisdom to know the difference.*

Adapted from "Safe Place" by Anita Savage, Stanford, CT



**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