

# 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

## February 2023

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### Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of Interest.

Meeting - 2/2/2023

Next Meeting - 3/2/2023

The 46th Annual Conference will be July 7-9 2023 at Denver, Colorado. More details coming in near future.



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.

## 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.

## The Chapter

## LOVE GIFTS

James & Maryellen Madden - Xmas donation for their daughter, Annie

## 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 ever 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**

## 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

Gary & Phyllis Adler - Matthew - son - 2/18  
 Marilyn Anton - Douglas Hofmockel - cousin/godmother - 2/7  
 Nina Bernstein - Andrew Voluck - son - 2/9  
 Donna & Gregory Class - Megan Maria Class - daughter - 2/9  
 Allison Crowder - Amber - daughter - 2/21  
 Frank & Linda Cymbala - Nicholas cymbala - son - 2/5  
 Carol Dawidziuk - Rachel - daughter - 2/27  
 Emilie Degville - Madeline - daughter - 2/8  
 Jennifer Dixon - Graham - son - 2/14  
 Harold & Marcia Epstein - Andrew Voluck - grandson - 2/9  
 Danielle Evelyn - Samir - son - 2/12  
 Jack & Freda Gross - Linda Joy Gross - daughter - 2/25  
 Frank Harms - Tyler - son - 2/16  
 Kimberlee Hills - Chuck Hills - brother - 2/24  
 Margaret Huss - Daniel - son - 2/27  
 Tash Jackson - Peter Simmons Jr - brother - 2/14  
 Ginger Jarrett - Adrienne - daughter - 2/4  
 Jack & Stacy Kabic - Brithy - daughter - 2/3  
 Vern & Joyce Kaiser - Michael - son - 2/2  
 Barbara & Michael Kaner - Max Steven Kaner - son - 2/7  
 Sandi Kensicki - Rose - sister - 2/5  
 Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner - Anna Kreiner - daughter - 2/10  
 Sara & Carl Kresge - Grant Kenneth Puskas - great grandson - 2/20  
 Lynette Lampmann - Shawn - son - 2/13  
 Sue Lawlor - Jim Sinha - son - 2/17  
 Janet Leflar - Scott - son - 2/22  
 Mary Mac Farland - Marc - son - 2/12  
 Carl & Josie Malitsky - Cynthia Malitsky - daughter - 2/8  
 James & Mary Beth Mattiford - Scott Mattiford - son - 2/26  
 Pat & Harry McCullough - Brian - son - 2/10  
 Debra McKinley - Hastings - Ken - brother - 2/17  
 Carol Meehan - Patrick W. Meehan - son - 2/11  
 Alexandra Milas - Demitra Vallianos - mom's sister - 2/17  
 Betty (Elizabeth) Miller - Dick Miller - husband - 2/8  
 Andrew Miller - Perri - daughter - 2/5  
 Jeffrey & Christine Miller - Teresa Leanne Miller - daughter - 2/20  
 Kathleen Mitchel - Jeffrey Hathaway - brother - 2/27  
 Fran & Kathy Moran - Denise Nicole Moran - daughter - 2/3  
 Aminah Na'im - Dawann - son - 2/14

# Anniversaries - Cont'd

Dale & Helen Ninneman - Dale Ninneman II - son - 2/29  
 Carol Phipps - Casey - daughter - 2/16  
 Matthew and Erica Puskas - Grant Kenneth - son - 2/20  
 Thomas & Jeri Bubbles Reinert - Thomas Reinert, Jr. - son - 2/19  
 Susan Reynolds - Craig Anderson - son - 2/3  
 Pamela Schneibolk - Douglas Hofmockel - brother - 2/7  
 Felicia Skalecki - Zuko Iroh McNulty - ,2/4  
 Penny & Steve Stanaitis - Mikayla Faith - daughter - 2/20  
 Luanne Stetler - Jordyn - grandson - 2/25  
 Ellen & Frank Svitek - Kate Elizabeth Svitek - daughter - 2/9  
 Mary Ellen Swider - Kelly Swider - daughter - 2/8  
 Marilyn Toole - Ted Toole - son - 2/26  
 Laura & Leo Weishew - Steven McGowan - brother - 2/2  
 Kathryn & Pat White - Steven White - son - 2/9  
 Terry & Bob Wolfe - Steven Moyer - son and stepson - 2/15  
 Frank Gianni - David Gianni - son - 2/10  
 Anthony & Cindy Zalesky - Max Zalesky - grandson - 2/12

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## OTHERS

When others forget, we remember.

We remember the birthdays and the anniversaries of their passing, no matter how many years have gone by.

We collectively are members of a fraternity (and sorority) that none of us wanted to join for the price of admission is way too great.

We call or email to say we're thinking of them on the 'special' day and to let them know their loved one is not forgotten.

We don't need to circle the date on the calendar, it is ingrained in our psyche as much as if it were our own.

When others ask, "aren't you over it yet?", we know the answer is, "no and never will be".

When others stammer, at a loss for words, we know a light touch or a hug speaks volumes.

When others helped us in our time of need, we pay it forward by helping others in need.

When we hear those trite cliches or stupid expressions of attempted compassion, we bite our tongues in muted silence.

When others ask, "how are you?" they really don't want to know, unless, unless they've walked in our shoes and know the pain.

When others forget, we remember, for we grieve with you.....

**Michael Kaner .....in Memory of my son,**

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## HOPE

Hope is the thing with feathers  
 That perches in the soul  
 And sings the tune without the words  
 And never stops at all.

**Emily Dickinson**

# BIRTHDAYS

Madeleine Adler - son - J. Peter Adler - 2/5  
 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  
 Frank & Rhonda 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  
 Kimberlee Hills - brother - Chuck Hills - 2/10  
 Sigrid Hirschhorn - daughter - Samantha - 2/20  
 Thomas & Virginia Hoesch - son - William E. Buddy Hoesch - 2/16  
 Margaret Innes - brother - Frank - 2/14  
 Joan Jagers - son - John Costello - 2/17  
 Julie - Kiley - Katie Keenan - Daughter/sister - Jordan - 2/17  
 Deborah Keevill - son - Brandon - 2/23  
 Shirley Kennedy - son - Philip V. Kennedy - 2/22  
 Margaret & Edward Kiefski - Sr. - son - Edward Kiefski - Jr. - 2/11  
 Lynette Lampmann - son - Shawn - 2/10  
 Marlene & Jerry Lener - - Daniel - 2/11  
 Liz & Joe Loeper - son - Jamey - 2/27  
 Andie Lunkenheimer - brother - Brennan - 2/26  
 Julie & Richard May - son - William L. May - 2/25  
 Eileen McCormick - daughter - Lauren - 2/3  
 Jennifer McGowan Clark - brother - Joseph McGowan - 2/25  
 Sue McMaster - cousin - Laura - 2/28  
 Sharmell & Chris McMurray - son - Ryan - 2/17  
 Kathleen Mitchel - brother - Jeffrey Hathaway - 2/19  
 Audrey Morasco - son - Christopher Morasco - 2/22  
 Mary Mulholland - son - Joseph McGowan - 2/25  
 Marian Mullahy - brother - Matt - 2/28  
 John & Mary Ann Murphy - daughter - Maureen Murphy - 2/13  
 Dale & Helen Ninneman - son - Dale Ninneman II - 2/24  
 Connie Nolan - son - Christopher Nolan - 2/9  
 Robert & Jean Phillips - son - Robert Phillips - 2/23  
 Carol Phipps - daughter - Casey - 2/18  
 Diane Reger - son - Jeff Morris - 2/19  
 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



## BIRTHDAYS - con't

Linda Sandlin - brother - LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden - 2/17  
 Rosemarie Scott-Griffiths - stepson - Timothy F. Griffiths - 2/18  
 Frank and Kay Shinnars - son - Erik Shinnars - 2/22  
 Felicia Skalecki - Zuko Iroh McNulty - 2/4  
 Janemarie Smith - daughter - Beth Jovanovic - 2/6  
 Margaret & Wade Stallard - son - Wade Hampton Stallard - III - 2/21  
 Elaine & Joe Stillwell - son - Denis E. O'Connor - III - 2/4  
 Nancy Thompson - friend - J. Peter Adler - 2/5  
 Esperanza & Libardo Toro - daughter - Maria Eugenia Toro - 2/9  
 Barbara Torrens - brother - Robert Birmele - 2/18  
 Steven Tucker - son - Steven II - 2/27  
 Mek Wagner - daughter - Paige - 2/1  
 Elizabeth & Henry Weaver - grandson - Donald Smith - Jr. - 2/24  
 Gisela Witte - son - Bruce G. Edlund - 2/24

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### CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve, too, for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun-loving but now are serious and absorbed.

Our friends and family miss the 'old us' too, and their comments show it. "Don't you think it's time to return to normal?" "You don't laugh as much as you used to." They are grieving for the person who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar who shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when our child dies. We wonder, our family wonders, our friends wonder - - when will he or she come out of it? Will they make it through the long sleep? What hues will show when they emerge? If you've ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of a cocoon, you'll know that the change is not quick or easy - - but worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the "new us." When our priorities become different and people become more important than things; when we grasp a hand that reaches, and reach in turn to pull another from his own cocoon; when we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge, then we can proudly say, "I have survived against overwhelming odds. Even though my child's death is not worth the change in and of itself, the changes and the challenges give us hope that we can be happy, we can feel fulfilled again, we can love again.

**Sherry Mutchler - Appleton, WI**

## New Years

New Year's brings unavoidable reminders of the passage of time. It can mean leaving behind a year that may have brought unimaginable pain and loss, a year you've wished would end. And at the same time, the idea of it ending can feel devastating. It can feel like leaving our past and our loved ones further behind. If the person you lost died in 2022, it can feel excruciating to face the first year without them here. But then the next year can bring the sting of knowing you'll no longer say they died "last year". And on and on, each year bringing a new reminder.

2022 is turning into 2023. Symbolically it can feel dramatic, significant, and weighted. But in reality, it's just another day. A single sleep. Nothing magical is changing or evaporating overnight tonight. The reality is that each and every day we get one day further from the last day we saw them. And each and every day how we remember them, how they still shape who we are and how we live, is something we actively do. Whether you lost someone ten days ago or ten years ago, you decide whether to lean in or lean out from the imprint they left on you.

I'm no more leaving my loved one behind in 2022 than I'm leaving behind my chronic lateness, night-owl tendencies, hatred of running, or anything else I've ever tried to "resolve" away with the changing of a year. On January 1st I will still wake up later than planned and I will still stay connected to those I've loved and lost, just like always. And I will remember that my connection does not live in my pain. In fact, I will remind myself that as time passes and I learn to better carry my pain, that is often when a bigger space has opened up for closer connections to exist.

I will remember that moving forward doesn't happen through forgetting. But nor does it happen through getting trapped in the pain of what could have been, or what should have been. It happens through some of the hardest work of grieving: remembering that the life we feel we "should" have lived with them here is not the only life worth living. So I can step into another day, another year, creating the space to hold the memories of the past while still allowing a meaningful life to grow in the present.

We cannot tell you what your resolutions should be as you move into another day, another week, another year. In fact, we're the first to give you [full resolution-absolution](#). Who can ever stick with resolutions anyway?

But for those of you who may be thinking about resolutions, who may be wondering how on earth one can even think about what it means to walk into another year after loss, the best we can do is share the resolutions that have meant the most to us. Perhaps you'll carry some of them with you or create a list of your own. We hope that you do.

I resolve to take you with me into the new year and then every day after that.

I'll hold onto memories of you, each a separate thread connected to our life together. I'll jumble them up into a ball, so I'm not constantly getting tangled in the past. But I'll make sure I can still pull out a single string whenever I want to remember.

I resolve to talk to other people about you. I'll tell someone who never knew you about the type of person you were. I'll ask those who knew you to share their stories with me.

I'll sing the songs you used to sing. I'll watch the movies you loved. I'll say the phrases you used to say, and after I'll tell someone standing nearby, "*my mom always used to say that.*"

I'll imagine what you'd be like if you were still alive today. What would you say to me if we could talk about kids, relationships, religion, and politics? I'll wonder if I would agree with your opinion, but when it comes time to make an important decision, I'll always take the advice I imagine you'd give.

I will play both parts of our relationship because you cannot speak for yourself, and I'll accept this one-sided, unrequited love because it's all there is. I will be happy with what I have left of you but feel sad for what I've lost. And this grief loop will play on repeat forever, and I will be okay with that.

I resolve to do these things this year, just as I've done every year since you died. And I won't apologize or feel foolish for doing any of it because there is no right or wrong way to love someone who's died.

And I love you still.

Submitted By Patricia Grossman, TCF Valley Forge

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  
Rhonda Gomez  
Chapter Leader  
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**The  
Compassionate  
Friends Inc.**

February 2023

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