



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## JANUARY 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

**Jan 7, 2016 General Sharing**

**Feb 7, 2016 General Sharing**

**July 8 - 10, 2016 39th TCF National Conference**  
**"Hope Rises on the Wings of Love"**  
**Scottsdale, Arizona**

**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**

**NEW PEOPLE**

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all 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.

**Debbie Helman**, son *Adam* (34)

**Carl Rudegeair**, son *Adam* (34)

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**REFRESHMENTS**

**Refreshments** may be donated in memory of loved ones. Beverages provided by the Chapter Please call **Rhonda (484)919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table.

**Carole Bailey** in memory of our son, *Matthew Bailey* on his anniversary 12/21

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**LOVE GIFTS**

**Reigna Cappelli** in loving memory of my son, *Dan Foley*

**Helen Deery** in loving memory of my son, *Ronald Deery, Jr.* on his birthday 12/10

**Joseph and Janie Dougherty** in honor of our son, *Brendan K. Dougherty* on his birthday 3/29 and anniversary 1/20

**Jack and Freda Gross** in honor of our precious daughter, *Linda Joy Gross*, on her birthday (12/28) who would be 54, and in memory of our daughter, who was sadly taken from us on 2/25.

**Rachel Himmelstein** in loving memory of my son, *Benjamin Himmelstein*

**Joan Kellett** in memory of my son, *Daniel T. Kellett*, on his birthday.

Daniel was the youngest of six.

**Jerome and Gloria Koval** in loving memory of our son, *Steven Koval*

**Ronda Stansbery** in honor of my daughter, *Susan Stansbery*

**Harry and Merrily Spiess** in loving memory of our son, *Ryan Spiess*, and our grandson, *Charlie Smith*

<b>NEW CHAPTER</b> has been chartered #2473 TCF of Erie, PA 3411 Saltsman Road Erie, PA 16510-3256 Meetings: second Tuesdays of each month 6:00 - 8:00PM Wheezy's Kove 4887 Buffalo Road, Erie PA 16510-2301	Meeting information Chapter Leaders: Laura Maas / Darlene Moore email: <a href="mailto:compassionatefriendseriecounty@gmail.com">compassionatefriendseriecounty@gmail.com</a> Phone contact: (814) - 504-1559
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**Dolores Yanni**

We send our love and compassion to the family of Dolores Yanni. Dolores past away at the age of 79, on December 9, 2015. She is survived by her husband Frank, two daughters Elizabeth Nebel and Diane Carson, four grandchildren and four siblings. Dolores was very devoted to her family.

Dolores and Frank joined the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends shortly after the death of their son David. Who died February 10, 1987. They have been very supportive of the Valley Forge Chapter.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends has been designated as her memorial fund. The following list have donated to this fund.

Dr. George and Joan Irwin in memory of Dolores, and her son, David.

Paul and Susan Jimenez in memory of Dolores, and in honor of her son David.

William C. Monroe and Helen Dalberg in memory of Dolores, and in honor of her son David.

Moises and Taube Schwartz in memory of Dolores, and in honor of her son David.

John D. Schmidt and Mary Alice Burns, in honor of the life of Dolores and her son David

William J. and Patricia Patterson in memory of Dolores, our neighbor and friend, and in honor of her son David.

William J. and Elizabeth Risty in memory of Dolores, and in honor of her son David.

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**DO IT YOUR WAY**

I think it's only fair to tell you - there is no bereaved parent of the month award nor an award for the one with the stiffest upper lip. In fact, what you will find if you try to be the most stoic, brave and strong, the one doing too well, is instead of a reward, you suffer the consequences.

It is not possible to lose someone as vital as one's child and not have the pain or deep grief. You will find a great many non-bereaved people will encourage you to play the old, *"if you'll pretend your're okay and it's really not so bad we'll let you come play with us but if you're going to cry and talk about your dead child then you can't play the game."*

This is one time in your life you don't have to meet anybody else's standards. There is nothing more unique about you than the way you express your grief - and you have that right, however it is manifested. A great deal of how you go about it is determined by how you have handled previous problems.

So, if someone tries to influence you to play the old game of rewarding you with attention because "you are doing well," tell them you're not doing well, that your child has died and you're hurting. Let them know it doesn't help you to pretend everything is okay. Do whatever it is you need to do to survive this trauma and don't worry about whether it pleases or displeases other people.

**DO IT YOUR WAY !!**

*Mary Cleckley, TCF, Atlanta, GA*

## FREE PHOTO BUTTONS

Frank Gomez has volunteered to make picture buttons for members of The Compassionate Friends. You may mail your photos directly to Frank, or bring them to our monthly meetings at the Valley Forge Chapter. We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Founders Hall, Valley Forge & Henderson Roads, King of Prussia, PA.

The buttons are 2 1/4 inches in diameter with a pin back. Face of loved ones should be a maximum of 1 1/2 inches, from the top of the head to the chin. You may request as many buttons as you like. Please send one photo for each button, the photo will be used to make the button, therefore your photos will not be returned.

Mail photographs, mailing address, and email address to:  
Frank Gomez, 12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343  
Frank@tcfvalleyforge.org



### 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 that 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**

Look at yourself in the mirror.  
Say to yourself "It is hard to lose a child."  
Grief can only be changed  
Say to yourself "It is reasonable to hurt."  
Say to yourself "Healing takes time."  
**BE GOOD TO YOURSELF**

*Sascha Wagner*

Grief cannot be conquered  
Like an enemy  
From pain  
To hope  
From hope  
To deeper life

*Sascha Wagner*

**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.

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

**Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* 1/27**  
**George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley* 1/21**  
**Joyce Caperilla, daughter *Jennifer* 1/14**  
**Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Daniel J. Cornely* 1/28**  
**Linda Cymbala, son *Nicholas Cymbala* 1/2**  
**Kimberly De Simone, daughter *Lacey* 1/18**  
**Bill & Donna Deasey, daughter *Michelle Deasey* 1/21**  
**Emilie Degville, daughter *Madeline* 1/20**  
**Abigail Figueroa, son *Jose C. Figueroa* 1/2**  
**Sharon Hirst, son *Tom* 1/19**  
**Joan Hornsby, daughter *Jackie* 1/30**  
**Karlin Hughes, son *Keegan Hughes* 1/17**  
**Barbara Jacobs, daughter *Pamela Faye* 1/3**  
**Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* 1/18**  
**Pat Kuchler, son *Michael* 1/23**  
**Ed & Linda Lincul, son *Matthew* 1/29**  
**John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Kaitlyn Logue* 1/19**  
**Sharon Mallozzi, son *Anthony* 1/28**  
**Linda Massey, son *Gene* 1/19**  
**Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* 1/23**  
**Marian Melchiorre, grandson *John Anthony Peticca, Jr.* 1/6**  
**Gerald & Margaret Milice, son *Gerald Milice* 1/28**  
**Rose & Mike Orlando, son *Michael* 1/27**  
**Barbara Pearl, son *Jason Seth Pearl* 1/14**  
**Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison* 1/3**  
**Sheldon & Joan Plam, son *Michael Tobiah Plam* 1/27**  
**Ruth Pluck, niece *Jackie* 1/30**  
**Mary Jane Pollart, son *Mark Andrew Steffler* 1/30**  
**Christine and Richard Purkiss, son *Adam Clark* 1/15**  
**Steve & Joann Reynolds, son *Chris* 1/10**  
**Elise Rice, husband *James W. Rice, Sr.* 1/27**  
**Margaret & Robert Rooney, daughter *Sharon Rooney* 1/30**  
**Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* 1/31**  
**Lynn & Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* 1/6**  
**Linda Sciarra, son *John Anthony Peticca Jr.* 1/6**  
**Barbara Smisko, daughter *Linda* 1/19**  
**Harry & Merrily Spiess, grandson *Charles Smith* 1/27**  
**Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* 1/24**  
**Juan & Casey Terrero, son *Jalen* 1/29**

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS CONTINUED**

**Ruth Thomas**, son *David George Thomas* 1/21  
**Weldon & Marie Tyson**, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson* 1/22  
**Nancy Willis**, son *Alex* 1/3  
**Anthony & Cindy Zalesky**, grandson *Max Zalesky* 1/13

**JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

**Gail Alyanakian**, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25  
**Bobbie Coyle**, son *Whitney Coyle* - 1/4/  
**Adriene & Peter De Moerloose**, daughter *Olivia* - 1/26  
**Susan Dillman**, daughter *Heather Lynne Dillman* - 1/19  
**Janie & Joseph Dougherty**, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* - 1/20  
**Jo Ann Gatlin**, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* - 1/31  
**Rita Gibbons**, husband *Thomas* - 1/3  
**Robert & Kathleen Grossi**, son *James Michael Grossi* - 1/28  
**Nancy & Gerald Hall**, son *Douglas Byron Hall* - 1/25  
**Tammy & Allen Howard**, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard* - 1/19  
**Karlin Hughes**, son *Keegan Hughes* - 1/19  
**Tracey-Anne Langley**, sister *Nataly* - 1/23  
**Kathleen & John Leeper**, son *Shaun Michael Leeper* - 1/15  
**Joan Lippre**, son *John* - 1/26  
**Liz & Joe Loeper**, son *Jamey* - 1/6  
**Vivian & Kenneth Maahs**, daughter *Kirsten* - 1/18  
**Anna E Marchese**, son *Matthew Paul Marchese* - 1/29  
**Julie & Richard May**, son *William L. May* - 1/4  
**Diane Mazzagatti**, son *John Pirocchi Jr.* - 1/30  
**Michael & Maria McFadden**, daughter *Rachel McFadden* - 1/14  
**Linda & Jim McGrath**, son *Paul Drew McGrath* - 1/22  
**Sue McMaster**, cousin *Laura* - 1/31  
**Mark & Kathryn McNally**, daughter *Beth Ann McNally* - 1/11  
**John & Mary Ann Murphy**, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy* - 1/11  
**Ashlie Nawrocki**, sister *Chereen* - 1/9  
**Connie & Richard Nolan**, son *Christopher Nolan* - 1/3  
**Jim & Bobbi O'Brien**, daughter *Beth Hubbard* - 1/26  
**Peggy O'Brien**, son *Rick O'Brien* - 1/9  
**Elizabeth Orbann**, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* - 1/1  
**Thomas & Demetra Patukas**, son *George Thomas Patukas* - 1/4  
**Betty Jane Peters - Neilson**, son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* - 1/21  
**Rosemary Peterson**, son *Donald R. Peterson* - 1/25  
**Robert & Jean Phillips**, son *Robert Phillips* - 1/3  
**Lyla T. Poulson**, brother *Joe* - 1/18

**January Anniversaries Continued**

**Joe & Marti Purifico, son *Jeffrey* - 1/18**  
**Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* - 1/12**  
**Andrew Randolph, brother *James* - 1/14**  
**Roy Redman, daughter *Carol* - 1/9**  
**Thomas & Jeri Reinert, father *Albert Volpe* - 1/18**  
**Carol Robinson, son *Jim Kearney* - 1/17**  
**Andrea Rohloff, son *Jim* - 1/23**  
**Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie* - 1/7**  
**Bernice Scheinfield, son *Richard Scheinfield* - 1/26**  
**Sheila & Jim Smith, son *Seth Richter* - 1/13**  
**Patti & Glen Smith, son *Chris* - 1/25**  
**Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* - 1/6**  
**Gary Snyder, daughter *Alyse* - 1/3**  
**Lorraine Spear, daughter *Kimberly Jean Spear* - 1/30**  
**Susan & Ron Spencer, son *Rob* - 1/18**  
**Thomas & Sara Thiermann, daughter *Heather Bruce Thiermann* - 1/23**  
**Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* - 1/1**  
**Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* - 1/14**  
**Pat Villante, daughter *Patty* - 1/30**  
**Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen* - 1/6**  
**Mimi & Tom Weber, son *Michael* - 1/17**  
**Judi Zollers, son *Sam* - 1/20**

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**WHY BUTTERFLIES?**

Since the early centuries of the Christian Church, the butterfly has symbolized the resurrection and life after death. The caterpillar signifies life here on earth; the cocoon, death; and the butterfly, the emergence of the dead into a new, beautiful and more free existence.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross movingly tells of seeing butterflies drawn all over the walls of children's dormitories in the World War II concentration camps. Since children are intuitive, she concludes that these children knew their fate and were leaving us a message.

TCF has adopted the butterfly as one of their symbols, a sign of hope to us that our children are living in another dimension with greater beauty and freedom.

*author unknown*

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**You can not do a kindness too soon,  
because you will never know how soon it will be too late.**

***Ralph Waldo Emerson***

**SHARED THOUGHTS ON FACING THE NEW YEAR**

One of the dictionary's definitions for Holiday is "A day of enjoyment". For many newly bereaved, that word has taken on a new meaning of "tough times". It seems this season does not allow enough time to heal, before the next holiday is upon us. The new year stirs up all kinds of emotions. It sometimes reminds us that the year our child or sibling died is gone, and we have put more space between us and our loved one's death.

We are new persons now, we need to take time to know ourselves, our capabilities, and priorities. Many of us will be facing our "first". We know there will be some bad moments. It is important that we don't take on the *whole* New Year. A *day*, an *hour*, or a *moment* is what most grieving people have learned to try and cope with.

Putting unreal expectations and demands on ourselves can remove any sense of progress, and increase the sense of failure. The only New Year's resolution we need make is, "I will do the best I can, and at the pace I can". We can expect that some days will take all we can muster to just get through it. That in itself is a big accomplishment, recognize it as such. When we have survived yesterday and today, our coping skills have improved and will give us strength to take on tomorrow. Remember, recovery is a very slow process, we want relief before it is possible. We must take our time and talk with the right people. It is important to seek those who have experienced this depth of pain. These people will gently encourage and support us. It is vital to know others who have survived the loss of a child or sibling.

There will be ups and downs. We can be thankful for those up days, and know the down days are normal, but they won't last forever. We can, and will be better. I wish you could be where I am in my grief, without going through where I have been. Unfortunately, we have to go through it ourselves, but not alone. There is help through The Compassionate Friends, we are here to share the pain, as well as the hope. The whole concept of TCF is to lean on one another. Utilizing the help that others offer to us can help us survive, and give a sense of growth and healing to the one reaching out to us. We know the depth of your despair. We have been there, and together we can make it.

My New Year's wish for you is well said by *Ruth Eiseman* (TCF Louisville, KY):

Where there is pain, let there be softening.  
Where there is bitterness, let there be acceptance.  
Where there is silence, let there be communication.  
Where there is despair, let there be hope.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* , TCF Valley Forge



## CONCERNING SIBLINGS

It's been said that when a child's brother or sister dies, actually three people are lost: the sibling and both parents. The sibling also loses a friend, playmate, confidant, role model, and lifelong companion. For the parents, the loss of a child is often so traumatic that they have little left to give to the surviving children. Yet the surviving sibling has fears, needs, and anxieties that must be explored and addressed if the child is to avoid negative long term consequences. Listed here are normal feelings siblings might have concerning the loss along with some suggestions on what to do to encourage their expression.

### Normal Thoughts

- \* "Did I cause the death?"
- \* "Will the rest of my family die?"
- \* "Who will take care of me now?"
- \* "I'm all alone now."
- \* "Half of me died."
- \* "I'm different from all the other kids."
- \* "I'm not a child anymore."
- \* "I feel left out."
- \* "Things will never be the same again."
- \* "No one cares about my grief, only about my parents grief."
- \* "I can't cry because it will make my parents more upset."
- \* "I feel guilty to be happy or to laugh."
- \* "Why wasn't it me?"
- \* "Will I die young too?"
- \* "I made it happen by wishing him dead!"
- \* "If I act like my sibling, maybe my parents will feel better."
- \* "Maybe my parents would love me more if I died!"

### Normal Feelings

- \* Impatient and angry at the world.
- \* Resentful over the attention the parents are getting.
- \* Resentful over the attention they are not getting.
- \* Fearful of having to replace the sibling.
- \* Guilt for feeling relieved over the death after a long illness.
- \* Guilt over all the "bad" thoughts, words, and fights with the deceased.

### How To Help

- \* The bereaved parents should constantly remind themselves to be sensitive to the feelings of the surviving children.
- \* The parents should strive to maintain as much of a normal routine as possible for the survivors.
- \* The parents should encourage grieving, openness and the expression of feelings in the children by grieving openly and expressively in front of them.
- \* Reassure them that they are not going to die, too.
- \* Reassure them that they are loved, wanted and okay.
- \* Reassure them that they did not cause the death in any way.
- \* Give lots of physical reassurance in the way of touching and hugs.
- \* Contact the teacher/teachers or school counselors.
- \* Ask them what and how they would like the school to be told.
- \* Prepare them for questions and remarks they can expect at school.
- \* Encourage them to resume their normal activities at their own pace.
- \* Remember the sibling's birthday and anniversary of the death.
- \* Remember the sibling at special family gatherings and functions.
- \* Don't be afraid to talk about the child that died.
- \* Talk about all the qualities of the child that died - positive and negative.
- \* Talk about the differences between the siblings – good and bad.
- \* Don't promise them a replacement sibling with talks of having another child.
- \* Remember surviving siblings cannot become, or replace, the deceased – brother or sister.

TLC Group grants anyone the right to use this information without compensation so long as the copy is not used for profit or as training materials in a profit making activity such as workshops, lectures, and seminars, and so long as this paragraph is retained in its entirety.

Adapted From: *Helping Children Cope With Loss*  
*Buz Overbeck – Joanie Overbeck*  
 TLC Group, TX 1995

## HOW WE SURVIVE

How We Survive.  
If we are fortunate,  
we are given a warning.

If not,  
there is only the sudden horror,  
the wrench of being torn apart;  
of being reminded  
that nothing is permanent,  
not even the ones we love,  
the ones our lives revolve around.

Life is a fragile affair.  
We are all dancing  
on the edge of a precipice,  
a dizzying cliff so high  
we can't see the bottom.

One by one,  
we lose those we love most  
into the dark ravine.

So we must cherish them  
without reservation.

Now.

Today.

This minute.

We will lose them  
or they will lose us someday.

This is certain.

There is no time for bickering.

And their loss  
will leave a great pit in our hearts;  
a pit we struggle to avoid  
during the day  
and fall into at night.

Some,  
unable to accept this loss,  
unable to determine  
the worth of life without them,  
jump into that black pit  
spiritually or physically,  
hoping to find them there.

And some survive  
the shock,  
the denial,  
the horror  
the bargaining,  
the barren, empty aching,  
the unanswered prayers,  
the sleepless nights  
when their breath is crushed  
under the weight of silence  
and all that it means.

Somehow, some survive all that and,  
like a flower opening after a storm,  
They slowly begin to remember  
the one they lost in a different way...  
The laughter,  
the irrepressible spirit,  
the generous heart,  
the way their smile made them feel,  
the encouragement they gave  
even as their own dreams were dying.

And in time, they fill the pit  
with other memories  
the only memories that really matter.

We will still cry.  
We will always cry.  
But with loving reflection  
more than hopeless longing.

And that is how we survive.  
That is how the story should end.  
That is how they would want it to be.

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Submitted by  
**Patricia Grossman**

## *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.*

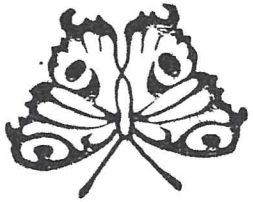
*Marie and Ken Hofmockel*



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS, INC.**

Valley Forge, PA Chapter  
Rhonda & Frank Gomez  
Chapter Leaders  
12 Brook Circle  
Glenmoore, PA 19343

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



...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

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