



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## January 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

Jan 5 General Sharing  
Feb 2 General Sharing

July 28-30 40th TCF National Conference  
"Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope"  
Orlando, FL.

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.  
ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations (which we call love gifts) given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.

If you donate to United Way at your place of work, and wish your contribution to go to the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, you may do so by entering: The Compassionate Friends - Valley Forge Chapter United Way ID# 04-104. on your pledge form.

PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:  
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER  
SEND TO: CHAPTER LEADER  
RHONDA GOMEZ

#### Chapter Leaders

Rhonda & Frank Gomez  
12 Brook Circle  
Glenmoore, PA 19343  
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone  
email: sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org

#### Database Record Keeper

Frank Gomez

#### Webmaster

Frank Gomez  
Email: frank@tcfvalleyforge.org

#### Newsletter Editors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel  
340 Allendale Road  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
(610)337-1907  
email: kendall.hofmockel@gmail.com

#### Love Gift Acknowledgements

Connie Nolan

#### Treasurer

Emil Nunez

#### Librarian

Carole Bailey

#### Chapter Advisors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel

#### Regional Coordinators

Ann Walsh 717-515-3000  
Bobbi Milne 215-801-2840

#### National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
Toll Free: (877)969-0010  
www.compassionatefriends.org  
email: national.office@  
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.

**Carol Bailey** in loving memory of my son, *Mathew J. Bailey* on his anniversary 12

-----

**LOVE GIFTS**

**Joan Kellett** in honor of my son, *Daniel*, for his birthday 12/7.

**Jerry and Gloria Koval** in loving memory of our son *Steven Koval*.

**Fred Michini** in memory of *Kevin Cutler* and his parents, *Susan Leoni & Richar Cutler*.

**Joan and Sheldon Plam** in loving memory of our son, *Michael Tobiah Plam*.

“Mike, we miss you and think about you every day. We love you.”

Love, Mom and Dad

**Carol Sannela** in honor of *Pat & Bob DiNenno's* 50th wedding anniversary.

In honor of *Kay & Dan Hurley's* 50th wedding anniversary,

In loving memory of Hurley's beloved daughter, *Patricia*.

In loving memory of my son, *David* and my husband, *Bob*.

**Timothy Tumminello & Marcia Winton** in loving memory of our daughter, *Natalie Harton*.

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

**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 who 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**

We send our love and compassion to **Karl and daughter Karen Snepp**. We recently learned of the passing of Karl's wife, **Suzanne** on December 2nd.

Karl & Sue came to the TCF Valley Forge Chapter January 1989, after the death of their son, Dave. Sue & Karl were very supportive of our chapter with love gifts, served as facilitators, and steering committee. They were willing to lend a hand in any area where needed. Sue was the treasurer until they moved from the area.

They were deeply missed when they moved to Tucson, in 1992, to be near Karen.

They became active in Local, Regional, and National TCF leadership. Together, they conducted Chapter Leadership Training Seminars throughout the US, and Sue was a founding director of the Compassionate Friends Foundation.

### **HUGGING: PERFECT CURE FOR WHATEVER AILS YOU**

No movable parts  
No batteries to wear out  
No periodic checkups  
Low energy consumption  
High energy yield  
Inflation proof  
No monthly requirements  
Theft proof  
Non-taxable  
Non-polluting  
And, of course, fully returnable

Hugging is healthy.  
It relieves tension,  
Combats depression,  
Reduces stress,  
Improves blood circulation.  
It's invigorating.  
It's rejuvenating.  
It elevates self-esteem.  
It generates good will.  
It has no unpleasant side effects.  
It is nothing less than a miracle drug!

*Author Unknown*

---

### **TCF Facebook**

Join 22,000 people who are sharing their grief journey at The Compassionate Friends Facebook page. The page is designed to be informative and supportive. Check out the question or quote of the day. You can find the page by going to TCF's website home page at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and clicking on the Facebook icon. Or you can go to Facebook and do a search for "The Compassionate Friends/USA." Join us and contribute to the conversation.

**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.**

**Omission from November 2016 newsletter Birthday listing  
Barbara Kirk, son *Eric* 11/29**

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

**Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* 1/27**  
**George & Anne Beerley, daughter *Jennifer Beerley* 1/21**  
**John Bilinski, daughter *Alayna* 1/22**  
**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**  
**Kathleen & Hugh Martin, Jr., son *Colin John "C.J." Martin* 1/12**  
**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**

**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS continued**

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  
Anthony & Marsha Schrader, daughter *Krista* 1/23  
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  
Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas* 1/21  
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* 1/3  
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* 1/13

**JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

Gail Alyanakian, brother *Glenn Alyanakian* - 1/25  
John Bilinski, daughter *Alayna* - 1/22  
Liliana Couchara, friend *Christian* - 1/2  
Bobbie Coyle, son *Whitney Coyle* - 1/4  
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *David* - 1/11  
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  
Robert & Lee Duffield, son *Michael Robin* - 1/16  
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* - 1/31  
Rita Gibbons, husband *Thomas* - 1/3/20  
Robert & Kathleen Grossi, son *James Michael Grossi* - 1/28  
Nancy & Gerald Hall, son *Douglas Byron Hall* - 1/25  
Jeanne R. Helmers, sister *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* - 1/9  
Tammy & Allen Howard, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard* - 1/19  
Karlin Hughes, son *Keegan Hughes* - 1/19  
Tracey-Anne Langley, sister *Nataly* - 1/23  
Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* - 1/1  
Kathleen & John Leeper, son *Shaun Michael Leeper* - 1/15  
Joan Lippre, son *John* - 1/26

**JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED**

- Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* - 1/6**  
**Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* - 1/18**  
**Anna E. Marchese, son Matthew *Paul Marchese* - 1/29**  
**Mary & Bob Matcovich, son *Christian* - 1/2**  
**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**  
**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 "Bubbles" Reinert, father (Bubbles) *Albert Volpe* - 1/1**  
**Carol Robinson, son *Jim Kearney* - 1/17**  
**Andrea Rohloff, son *Jim* - 1/23**  
**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**

## SHARED THOUGHTS RESOLVING TO CARE FOR OURSELVES

We all approach the New Year very differently. Many cannot wait for the year our child or sibling died to pass, while others feel it separates them further from that person. But, the one thing most newly bereaved agree on, is that they are glad the holidays are over. For some the anticipation was far greater than the holiday itself. When pain and stress controls our lives it is very difficult to be optimistic.

We must try to face the New Year with the thought that we will not always be in this much pain. As difficult as it is for us to believe, the pain does soften. One day you will find a tolerable life again. It will not be the same as it was, but in many ways our lives can be richer, for we don't fret over the trivial things we used to. We have learned the real values in life. January is the time of year we struggle to put all our trying events behind us, and begin the year with new expectations. Unfortunately, that does not apply to our grief. We cannot "get on with our life" until we have spent sufficient time resolving our grief. All too often, we choose to repress the most painful emotions. They are too difficult to share with others, and we feel too fragile to deal with them. Once unresolved issues become delayed grief, it can be very damaging, and much harder to resolve.

Perhaps, one of our New Year resolutions should be allowing ourselves freedom to grieve. We need to take time to read, attend meetings, phone a friend, cry, walk, eat healthier, and in general remove our name from the bottom of the list of people to care for, we need to place ourselves at the top of the list, making ourselves number one. We cannot always be a reservoir of strength, this may be the time to let others care for us.

We can't expect this to be a good year if our grief is fresh. But, we should expect good things as well as bad. We have survived the impossible ordeal of the death and funeral. We have learned to take one day at a time, and not to set our expectations too high. If a good day comes, cherish it. Many times we have problems with the most important ingredient of recovery, and that is to learn to laugh and be happy again. We feel guilty for that moment of pleasure, and sometimes even feel it disrespectful. This is not a sign of forgetting, or a lack of love, it is a very healthy sign of hope.

I would like to share the last stanza of one of *Sascha Wagner's* poems, "The New Year", with you.

But let us not forget  
that this may be the year  
when love and hope and courage  
find each other somewhere

in the darkness  
to lift their voice and speak  
**Let there be light.**

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

**“WHY**

I still cry and wonder, Why,  
“Why” my son had to die?  
He wasn’t the only one, I know,  
But, he was mine and I love him so.  
So, until the day we meet in heaven,  
He’ll be in my heart and mind forever.

*Gwen Kearns* – TCF, Valley Forge, PA

Understand and accept that for you there is still a future, one that can be as bright and good as you make it. You have before you the rest of your life. What you do with it is entirely a matter of choice. There are no rules or laws that require you to mourn forever.

*Harriet Sarnoff Shiff*

-----  
**I’M TIRED OF BEING STRONG**

“Forgive me Lord, but I’m tired of being some of the things I’ve tried so hard to be ... I’m tired of being so capable, so efficient. I’m tired of the compliment, ‘You are such a strong person, I admire your strength’. I’m tired of being considered so patient and understanding that people dump their troubles on me. I’m tired of being so cheerful. I want to be free to be cross and complain and not get a ‘buck up, old chap’ routine. I’m tired of being considered so independent, so strong. Sometimes, at least sometimes, Lord, I want to be weak and helpless, able to lean on somebody, able to cry and be comforted. Lord, I guess there are just times when I want to be a child again, running to climb on my mother’s lap.”

*Marjorie Holmes* “Hold Me Up a Little”

-----  
**BITTERSWEET**

Is good in chocolate...looks nice as a growing plant...but is hard to take when it’s a family day with one child missing.

*Joan D. Schmidt* – TCF, Central Jersey

-----  
**ONE MORE DAY**

If I were granted one more day  
To spend alone with you,  
I’d say the things I should have said  
And do all I wanted to do.

I’d tell you that I love you.  
Did I tell you that before?  
Or did I just take it for granted  
That you’d always walk through the door?

I’d play all the games you asked me to play  
But I was too busy, you see.  
I’m sorry for the times I wasn’t there,  
Now, I wish you were here for me.

I’d tell you I miss you so very much.  
You’ve been gone forever, it seems,  
And I still hope that one of these days  
I’ll wake from this terrible dream.

If one more day were given to me  
To tell you the things I’d say,  
The only thing I’d want after that,  
Would be just one more day.

*Crystal Gibb*  
Bereavement Magazine  
January 1991



**THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM**

There's an elephant in the room.  
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around  
it.  
Yet we squeeze by with, "How are you?"  
and, "I 'm fine" ...  
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.  
We talk about the weather.  
We talk about work.  
We talk about everything else -  
except the elephant in the room.

There's an elephant in the room.  
We all know it is there.  
We are thinking about the elephant  
as we talk together.  
It is constantly on our minds.  
for, you see, it is a very big elephant.  
It has hurt us all,  
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.  
Oh, please, say her name.  
Oh, please, say "Barbara" again.

Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.  
For if we talk about her death,  
Perhaps we can talk about her life?  
Can I say "Barbara" to you and not have you  
look away?  
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me  
Alone ...  
In a room ...  
With an elephant.

*Terry Kettering*

**MEMORIES**

Within each tear that falls is a mirror  
That reflects a special moment in our lives.  
They trickle warmly down  
And land in a puddle in my heart.

*Tammy Tobac*  
TCF, Pittsburgh, PA

**THE ANSWER IS BECAUSE**

Early in the evening  
Reluctant to the dawn  
Scot would choose to die  
Before the early morn  
He chose the final method  
The one that hurts the worst  
He chose to die the loss -  
The loss of his self worth.  
I miss him something terrible  
I wish he knew I cared  
I wish he knew I loved him  
And really would have shared.  
I hope he's happy now  
I hope he's found his peace  
I hope he's found the things he wants  
The things he really needs.

*Stacy Blumenthal*  
in memory of her brother  
TCF, St. Louis, MO

**LIKE THE BUTTERFLY**

It fluttered there, above my head,  
Weightless in the soft breeze.  
I reached up my hand, it lit upon my finger  
Waving glistening wings gently,  
Looked at me for timeless moments.  
I smiled, reaching deep, and  
Finding all those cherished memories.  
As it flitted off through the sunlit morn,  
I knew we had said hello, once more.

*Leslie Langford*, sibling  
TCF North Platte, NE

## Waterbugs and Dragonflies

Down below the surface of a quiet pond lived a little colony of water bugs. They were a happy colony, living far away from the sun. For many months they were very busy, scurrying over the soft mud on the bottom of the pond. They did notice that every once in a while one of their colony seemed to lose interest in going about with its friends. Clinging to the stem of a lily, it gradually moved out of sight and was seen no more.

'Look!' said one of the water bugs to another, 'One of our colony is climbing up the lily stalk. Where do you suppose she is going?' Up, up, up it went slowly. Even as they watched, the water bug disappeared from sight. Its friends waited and waited but it didn't return. 'That's funny!' said one water bug to another. 'Wasn't she happy here?' asked a second water bug. 'Where do you suppose she went?' wondered a third. No one had an answer. They were greatly puzzled.

Finally one of the water bugs, the leader of the colony, gathered its friends together. 'I have an idea. The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk must promise to come back and tell us where she went and why.' 'We promise', they said solemnly.

One spring day, not long after, the very water bug who had suggested the plan found himself climbing up the lily stalk. Up, up, up he went. Before he knew what was happening, he had broken through the surface of the water, and had fallen onto the broad, green lily pad above.

When he awoke, he looked about with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. A startling change had come to his old body. His movement revealed four silver wings and a long tail. Even as he struggled, he felt an impulse to move his wings. The warmth of the sun soon dried the moisture from the new body. He moved his wings again and suddenly found himself up above the water. He had become a dragonfly.

Swooping and dipping in great curves, he flew through the air. He felt exhilarated in the new atmosphere. By and by, the new dragonfly lighted happily on a lily pad to rest. Then it was that he chanced to look below to the bottom of the pond. Why, he was right above his old friends, the water bugs!. There they were, scurrying about, just as he had been doing some time before. Then the dragonfly remembered his promise: 'The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk will come back and tell where he or she went and why'.

Without thinking, the dragonfly darted down. Suddenly he hit the surface of the water and bounced away. Now that he was a dragonfly he could no longer go into the water. 'I can't return!' he said in dismay. 'At least I tried, but I can't keep my promise. Even if I could go back, not one of the water bugs would know me in my new body. I guess I'll just have to wait until they become dragonflies too. Then they'll understand what happened to me, and where I went'.

And the dragonfly winged off happily into its wonderful new world of sun and air.

Every time that I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." That wish, unfortunately, can never come true.

The other wish I hear is, "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child? Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child. I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and I thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse, or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew that all of the "crazy" grief reactions I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent", but will forevermore be a "recovering bereaved parent".
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are terrible times for us. I wish you could tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try to coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us reexamine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish that you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was the moment before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me -- maybe you'll like me still.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us.

Do you remember how Pavlov, the famous psychologist, rewarded his dogs for doing the right thing? Their behavior repeated! If a neighbor sends a plate of cookies on the day of your child's birth, tell her how much you appreciated her remembering your child. If a relative jots a note in a Christmas card and says he is thinking about you during this difficult time, write back and thank him for acknowledging your pain. If by accident a friend mentions your child's name and it makes you cry, you may not be able to thank them at the time, but you can tell them later how important it is to talk about your child. Whether one of your wishes is fulfilled by accident or through great sensitivity, reward others for what they have done for you. Chances are good that they will repeat these kindness' on other occasions and perhaps your wish of having more understanding friend and relative will come true.

*Elaine Grier, Philip's Mom, Atlanta Chapter*



**THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS, INC.**

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

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SOUTHEASTERN  
PA  
PERMIT # 635

**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