



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JULY 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. For information please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

July 6 General Sharing

Aug 3 General Sharing

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

Hotel reservation see page 2

Sept 16 Butterfly Release (see page 3)

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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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

Bill Padove & Jen Scales, son of Bill & stepson of Jen, *Zachary* (25)

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.

REFRESHMENTS

Mary Lou Harrison, in loving memory of my son, ♥ *Scott* ♥ on his anniversary 6/12'
Luanne Stefler, in loving memory of my grandson, *Jordyn* (19)

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

LOVE GIFTS

Marco & Patricia Giubulato, in loving memory of our daughter,
Robin Zarelli on her 25th anniversary (seems to be impossible).

John & Eileen Kostic, (The John E. Kostic Memorial Foundation) in honor of our son *John*
who passed away on November 18. The Compassionate Friends Valley Forge Chapter is a
wonderful organization helping families who have lost children and we have appreciated
receiving your newsletter.

Marge Fixter Randolph, in loving memory of my son, *Doug Fixter* on his birthday 6/19,
And thanking **Marie Hofmockel** for her "Shared Thoughts".

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

TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE HOTEL REGISTRATION
Conference Hotel Registration should be made directly to the Hotel.

Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek
14100 Bonnet Creek Resort Lane
Orlando, Florida 32821
Phone: 1-407-597-3600

At this point the only rooms available in the TCF reserved block for the conference are two queens or king size beds. The Discounted Compassionate Friends price is \$145 plus 12% tax for either of these choices. You must make them aware that you are a TCF Attendee to get the reduced price.



BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
Saturday, September 16, 2017 at 3PM

Upper Merion Township Park (back of Police Station)
175 West Valley Forge Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406

Diagonally across from our monthly meeting place at Good Shepherd Church.
This event will be held in back of the township building, at the Gazebo rain or shine.

Cost \$5.00 per butterfly - registration now being accepted.
August 15th last day to place order.
There is no admission or parking fee.

Water will be provided by the chapter. Please bring folding chairs or a blanket to sit on.

A family may order one butterfly to share, or order one butterfly for each family member. You may order as many butterflies as you wish. All butterflies must be preordered. If you are unable to attend on this date, we can release the butterfly that you have purchased in your loved one's name. The names of all loved ones will be read during the program. **Everyone welcome, (even if you do not order a butterfly) bring a friend.**

For questions, please call TCF Valley Forge 484-919-0820
Any further details will be posted at the VF website. www.tcfvalleyforge.org

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Total number of butterflies ordered: _____ \$5.00 each

Total money (no credit cards) enclosed: _____

Please forward registration and check to: Rhonda Gomez,
12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343

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:

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* 7/27
Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* 7/1
Herb and Fran Barnett, son *Andrew* 7/2
Loretta Bovell, daughter *JoAnna* 7/12
Gary Chavez, son *Christopher Dale Chavez* 7/19
Tracy & Mike Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* 7/19
Hazel Corbin, daughter *Dayle C, Rutledge* 7/7
Jennifer Dixon, son *Graham* 7/22
Tom & Judy Hahn, daughter *Erica Hilley* 7/2
Nancy Hartzell, son *Adam* 7/29
Giuliana Hilend, son *Patrick Andrew Hilend* 7/9
Janet & Dave Keller, brother *Thomas A. Keller* 7/3
Al & Sue Koenig, daughter *Emily Grace Koenig* 7/8
Lisa Gie Liem, daughter *Stephanie* 7/14
Joan Lippre, son *John* 7/16
Stacy Ludy, daughter *Alyssa Kenny* 7/27
Maureen & Pat Mc Cormick, son *John* 7/20
Robert McCullough, daughter *Caroline Patricia McCullough* 7/19
Cameron and Sandra Meikle, daughter *Laura* 7/4
Pete Mihalek, son *Andy* 7/15
Alexandra Milas, brother *Nicholas Stathes* 7/1
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Brian Michael Murphy* 7/20
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, brother *Jack Coladonato* 7/14
Gary & Patricia Otto, son *Benjamin Otto* 7/26
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Walter C. Peters* 7/4
& son *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* 7/25
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* 7/11
Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* 7/18
Tracey Robinson, son *Connor* 7/6
Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* 7/24
Abigail Schwartz, mother *Barbra* 7/15
Mike & Beverly Smith, son *Ryan* 7/18
Helen Smith, son *Bob Smith* 7/2
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* 7/15
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* 7/27
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* 7/16
Lisa M Spinks, brother *Robert* 7/9

JULY BIRTHDAYS continued

Linda Sposato, daughter *Bernadette Funaro* 7/23
Dave & Lynn Strange, son *Bradley* 7/9
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* 7/1
Jean Sykora, son *Mark* 7/14
Chris & Larry Teal, son *Wade Teal* 7/30
Renee Teufel, son *Gregory* 7/28
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* 7/21
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* 7/3
Steven Tucker, son *Patrick Ryan* 7/12
Barbara Tuller, son *Charles* 7/3
Pat Villante, daughter *Laura* 7/28
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria* 7/4

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* - 7/27
Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* - 7/14
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* - 7/9
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown* - 7/23
Ellen & James Burbano, son *Eric* - 7/14
Maureen Butler, son *Terence* - 7/23
David Castle, best friend *Eric* - 7/14
Joanne & Tom Christman, son *Kyle R. O'Neill* - 7/20
Catherine Dardozi, grandson *Evan Schmidt* - 7/15
Vanessa Diaz, friends child *Samir* - 7/12
Herman & Lily Eason, son/stepson *Peter Montijo* - 7/27
Bob & Connie Ercole, son *David* - 7/2
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gailey* - 7/14
Ron & Sue Gamza, daughter & grandson *Rachel & Troy* - 7/24
Gwen & Walt Gearhart, grandson *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12
Carolyn & Allen Gephart, son *Joseph Malec* - 7/14
Craig & Kathleen Gerland, daughter *Alexis* - 7/18
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, son *Frank Jr.* - 7/17
Danielle & Joshua Graham, brother *Jake* - 7/29
Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Beatrice K Hildebrandt, son *John R. Hildebrandt* - 7/12
Mark & Vicki Hoffman, son *Eric Daniel Hoffman* - 7/21
Dennis & Lois Ianovale, son *Dennis* - 7/6
Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* - 7/16
Barbara Kirk, son *Eric* - 7/2
Bob & Laura Latshaw, son *Scott* - 7/12
Lisa Gie Liem, daughter *Stephanie* - 7/19
Maryann Lockyer, son *Keith* - 7/15
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* - 7/27

JULY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Maryellen & James Madden, daughter *Anne Marie Madden* - 7/28
Lynne & John Malloy, son *David Gross* - 7/1
Linda Massey, son *Gene* - 7/16
Lee & Laurie Maxwell, son *Dan* - 7/21
Frank & Bernadette McAllister, son *Christopher J. McAllister* - 7/11
Cheryl Mezzaroba, son *Lon Mezzaroba* - 7/24
Fran Miller, son *Christian* - 7/27
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, son *Raymond "Jim"* - 7/26
Christy O'brian, daughter *Evie* - 7/19
Steve Patrizio, son *Stephen* - 7/5
Janet Patrizio, son *Stephen* - 7/5
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Walter C. Peters* - 7/21
Chris Poulsen, nephew *Jerry* - 7/3
Marie Poulsen, grandson *Jerry August Warfel* - 7/3
Christine Rizol, son *Tyler* - 7/10
Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12 and husband *Jonathan Rogers* - 7/13
Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* - 7/10
Linda Sandlin, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* - 7/6
Donna & Eric Schaertl, son *Jared M. Schaertl* - 7/13
Suzanne Schoenhut, son *Joe* - 7/5
Anna Schwarz, son *Jerrold Schwarz* - 7/11
Matthew Silverman, sister *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Howard & Margorie Silverman, daughter *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Janis Siravo, son *Christian* - 7/22
Eileen Smith, son *Craig* - 7/31
Carole Solomon, niece *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Philip & Ilene Spector, neice *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Margaret & Wade Stallard, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* - 7/27
Margaret & Matthew Strickler, son *Timothy Strickler* - 7/23
Suzanne Teleha, son *Peter Teleha* - 7/29
Hellmut Theil, son *Hellmut Theil, Jr.* - 7/14
Gerard & Jane Thimm, son *Gary Thimm* - 7/12
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* - 7/28
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* - 7/2
Shelly Wagner, son *Andrew Wagner* - 7/26
Irene & Bob Weaver, daughter *Monica* - 7/17
Ellen & Dale Weaver, son *Jeffrey M. Weaver* - 7/29
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* - 7/28
Patricia White, daughter *Diane Patricia White* - 7/4
Donna White, sister *Diane White* - 7/4
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* - 7/9
Andy & Peg Yanoviak, daughter *Elizabeth "Betsy" Hershman* - 7/5

SHARED THOUGHTS ON THE COMFORTED BECOMING THE COMFORTER

Guarding the safety of our children is probably one of the highest priorities on every parent's list. Our children's dying diminishes us as human beings. We feel we have failed to protect the most important thing in our life. The death robs us of our zest for living. It can take the power, motivation, and joy from our jobs, whether it be a menial or the ultimate position in life. For this period of time it is essential that we become the comforted. Recognizing the depth of our loss and despair is not self-pity. It can help us justify our reactions and behavior, and know our feelings are normal for what we are experiencing. We must except our feelings, even though they are not happy, and cause much dampness from our tears. We need to keep grief alive long enough to resolve it. This does not mean a lifetime of grief, but it is much longer than we want it to be, and certainly much longer than non-bereaved people will allow us.

Our pain can not be explained or finished. Our children are our very essence of life, and our joy of living. They have made us part of who and what we are. Life gave us the blessing of our children, how empty our lives would have been had we never known them. We savor the dreams of what they might have become. After much grieving and healing, we become stronger in the broken places. As Don Hackett writes about our dead children, he says, "they become gentle and soft music in our souls".

We all need to be comforted in early grief. Often, people try too soon to become a comforter to family members. Laying our grief aside to reach out can be a mistake. For we can help others most by letting our fragmented and fragile bodies and minds heal first. That is why airline attendants always say, in an emergency, to place your oxygen mask on before your child's, so you will be better equipped to offer help. After your grief has softened, we hope you will become a comforter to your family, and your Compassionate Friends. A large part of comforting should be to build comforters for those who will need us, and in turn, the comforter's reward is great and completes the grief cycle for them.

Healing can take place just by knowing others have survived what we feel is impossible to endure. Sometimes we have to struggle to do what we think we can not do. You can be happy again. We wish happiness could come sooner, but it doesn't. The loss is too great for a quick fix to be lasting. We must go through the sorrow and pain before we can hear the gentle and soft music in our souls. Often we have the volume control in our hand and blame our hearing, rather than turning up the music. Listen for and expect the gentle and soft music in your soul.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

<p>Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three - All they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have. Edward Everett Hale</p>
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Expectations play a large role in our grief. Certainly, expecting to feel better and to not always hurt is helpful, (although we tend to expect it to happen too soon) but other expectations can be hurtful. Some of these are the expectations we have of those around us - our friends and relatives.

We “expect” them to listen to us talk about our child and our pain. We “expect” them to be sensitive and aware that we are hurting more on a particular day or date. We “expect” that they will understand that it is normal to grieve for so long. We “expect” them to understand our mood swings. We “expect” and we “expect”, and when they don’t understand or provide what we need we are angry and hurt.

TO EXPECT IS TO PRESUME. When we expect a friend or relative to behave a certain way or say a particular thing, we presume they know what we want or need. **This is rarely possible.** Even if the other person is a bereaved parent, he cannot read our minds. What they needed in their grief may not be what you need in yours. If our friend or relative is not a bereaved parent, it is even less likely they will have any idea how to help us.

The problem with expecting understanding and help from another, is that we set ourselves up to be hurt. On page 452 of one of my favorite books, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, it says, “my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations.” Of course, serenity doesn’t exist for the bereaved parent, but the hurt we feel from others IS “inversely proportional to our expectations.”

If we expect a friend or relative to do or say the right thing and they don’t, we are hurt. But, on the other hand, if we do not expect their reaction and they react as we would like them to, we will be pleased. I think it would be better to be pleased now and then, rather than be hurt almost every time.

We need to remind ourselves over and over, that **others do not know how to help us.** They are not being cruel, uncaring or indifferent. **They simply do not know what to say or do.** Therefore, the responsibility to let them know of our needs lies with us. Not only must we tell them of our needs, after we have done that we must take it a step farther. In the future, if the individual does not react in the way we prefer, we must try to accept this and consider that, for reasons only they can know, they are either unable or unwilling to do as we ask. We can’t know their innermost motivation anymore than they can know our innermost needs.

To eliminate the hurt we feel from others **we must let go of our expectations of them.** We can only be hurt if we **ALLOW** ourselves to be hurt by something that was done or said (or not done or said) in ignorance. **Remember, we ourselves did not know of bereaved parents needs** before our child died. There will be times we must simply say, “He or she doesn’t know,” or we might ask ourselves, “How important is it that that person is not supportive?”

It is up to us to protect ourselves from any more hurt than we already have. **If we stop expecting what others may not or cannot give, we can stop some of the unnecessary hurt.**

T'S THE MUSIC THAT BONDS THE SOUL

The room you once lived in
Doesn't look the same.
The people who used to call you
Never mention your name.

Like the aching in my heart-
A scar that just won't heal.
Or the way a special song
Can change the way I feel.

The car you used to drive
They may not make anymore;
And all the things you treasured
Are boxed behind closed doors.

Brother, you must know that the music
Bonds us and will keep us close;
Because secretly I know in my heart
It's the music you miss the most.

The clothes you set the trends by
Are surely out of date.
The people you owed money to
Have wiped away the slate.

So let the world keep turning,
Time can take its toll.
As long as the music is playing
You'll be dancing in my soul.

Things have changed and changed
Since you went away.
But some things remain the same

Stacie Gilliam
TCF, N. Oklahoma City, OK

THE EMPTINESS

The emptiness is what fills up inside of you when you give up hope.
The emptiness means different things to different people.
It is understood inside that person and that person only.
It is the cold sadness lurking inside.
Always there but seems to hide.
Covered up by happiness, but surely finds its way back inside.
The emptiness is not evil, it is only sadness.
The emptiness is the feeling you get when you have lost someone close to you.
The emptiness is when your heartaches.
The emptiness is when you feel you can't face another day.
The feeling you get when you are all alone.
When no one understands.
When your fate is in your hands.
You take a deep breath and face another day.
For that is what everyone expects.
That is the emptiness.

Christine Santoleri - TCF, Valley Forge, PA
for her sister, **Katie Santoleri** 6/5/81 - 8/14/92

CARRY YOUR OWN SIGN POST

Carry your own signpost. Really I am serious. Think about it. They liken the grief process to a journey, and I agree with that symbolism. But who makes the road signs on the way? It feels like everywhere and everyone has an idea, a "method", or opinion of where we should be in our grief. They stick those sign posts everywhere ...in the well meant phrases ("It's time to move on"); in the avoidance of talking about the one who died; in their speech to others around us; in the barrage of Techniques, Methods, and Guidelines people are willing to tell us to help us cope.

But what if we carry our own signpost? We would always be in the right place - after all you put what you want on the sign. We would always be going in the right direction doesn't matter if it's backwards, forwards, sideways ... the point at this pain filled stage in our life is we are moving - period. We are going to go every which way when grieving. There is no straight line, no technique to learn, just a gradual moving through. That is the next thing to put on your sign ... you post the speed. You set the timeline. Now be honest... don't you feel like there should be a sign above your head anyway? Ever changing, and of course with the standard toilet paper roll affixed to it ... those of you who are going "huh?" need to stop in your tour at Grief Inc. and visit Darcie.

By the way did I mention you can change your sign minute to minute? Use a white board and marker ... much easier. We can turn it into a warning sign - 'WARNING BEREAVED PEOPLE TEND TO TAKE UNEXPECTED TURNS' - then no one trying to walk with us will be surprised when we suddenly veer over to Weepy City for coffee, or to brake hard for Memory Crossings. One place I end up at a lot is Tear Drop Falls. I tend to look like hell when I leave, but I always feel better later. We all have standing reservations at Heartbreak Hotel, and the "tourists" just don't understand the immense meaning of the landmarks in our land - Guilt Mountain, the Bitter Cliffs, and of course we all troop through the Angry Desert once in a while. Some people spend a lot of time there. ... but of course they are carrying their own sign, so that is ok... they will come and meet us at the one sane place we all gravitate to ... the Compassionate Friends Sharing Meeting.

These landmarks are important to those of us who have already toured them, they serve as reminders of how far they have come in their journey - thank goodness some of them stick around so we can read their signs ... and find the gem of our journey ... the Hope Diamond! Carry your own sign, set your own pace, be where you feel you need to be. It is your heart that is broken, it is the love that you have for your child that will guide you - if you let it help you carry your sign.

CindyVogt
TCF/SouthWestManitoba

THE LOSS OF A CHILD

The grief of parents following the death of a child is one of the most profound forms of bereavement there is.

What Is It Like to Lose a Child?

Every bereavement is unique. Even when you are two parents grieving for the same child, you will grieve differently and at a different pace. At a time when you most need each other for support and understanding, your preoccupation with your own loss may make it difficult for you to help your partner. Or you may both take on the role of protector and try to "be strong" for the other, concealing your own pain for fear of adding to the other's distress. This situation is impossible to sustain and can lead to misunderstanding, even a breakdown in communication. You may find yourself saying, "He doesn't seem to feel anything", or "I can't seem to get through to her any more". Sexual intimacy, which once gave life to the child, may now be unbearable for one or both of you.

In the early months you may feel overwhelmed, helpless, disoriented, frightened and exhausted. It is not uncommon to imagine that you see or hear the child you have lost, and while this can be comforting at the time it can also seem to confirm your fear that you are going mad. You may, perhaps, wish for death because life no longer seems worth living or in the hope that you will be reunited with your child. Many partnerships suffer after such a loss. Far from bringing parents together, a child's death can threaten the stability of even the best relationships.

The View from Outside

Family and friends may urge you to pull yourself together or they may avoid contact because they too feel helpless and afraid of inadvertently causing further hurt. They may even feel threatened - if your child can die, they worry that so too can theirs.

It is at this point that many bereaved parents, feeling abandoned, seek outside help. But to seek help is also to have to acknowledge the reality of the loss, which some people understandably try to resist, often for several months. You may function on "automatic pilot" by going through the motions of a safe and familiar routine until you feel able to experience the full anguish of your grief. Sometimes it is not until the first year has passed that bereaved parents really begin the task of grieving, although some will still try to avoid directly facing up to their loss. After the second anniversary of the death, however (or the second missed birthday, Christmas, Mother's or Father's Day), your grief may erupt violently because avoidance and denial are no longer possible. Unfortunately, by this time others may expect you to have recovered from your loss and so the help you need may not be immediately available.

But the loss of a child is lifelong. You are likely to be reminded of the child you have lost when you see children of a similar age or appearance and, as you watch other children growing up, you will be reminded of what your own child would have been like and what you are missing. In time you may find some new purpose in living, but you do not ever forget the child you have lost. That child is, and will remain, part of you.

Why Parents' Grief Is Different

When your child dies, you feel as if you have failed in your role as protector, and this sense of failure can result in strong feelings of guilt and low self-esteem. You may also become over-protective towards any surviving children. At the same time, it is possible that in the early stages of your grief you will be preoccupied with the dead child to the exclusion of your other children, if you have them. It is the dead child you want and who embodies for you all that is ideal. The effect on the remaining children, who cannot replace the dead child or compete with this "perfect angel", is likely to be profound.

If the dead child was your only child, you lose your identity as a parent, and if you lost your first child through miscarriage, or the baby was stillborn, or died soon after birth, you may feel a sense of inadequacy and failure. In a number of ways children embody parents' hopes for the future. Their death means that they will not be able to care for you in old age when the protective, caring roles are reversed.

Your child's death also deprives you of your claim to immortality. The characteristics that have made you what you are will not now be passed on to future generations.

All parents struggle to find a meaning for their loss. Your sense of what is right and fair is deeply shaken, and you seek a purpose for the death which will restore meaning to your life and the belief that your world is still basically safe - for, after all, if a child can die, anything can happen.

Trying to Understand

Anyone who may be trying to understand what it feels like to lose a child might find it helpful to remember what one bereaved mother said in reply to someone who thought she should be "over it" after two years. "Which one of your children could you do without".

Jan McLaren, Director and Senior Counselor of the Laura Centre In Leicester, a centre that has been established specifically for bereaved parents. Submitted by *Kathleen Leeper*, mother of *Shaun Leeper* 8/17/74 - 1/15/96



**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