



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JULY 2018

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

July 5 General Sharing

Aug 2 General Sharing

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

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.

Brooke Test sister, *Devan* (29)

Morgan Taylor sister, *Devan* (29)

Tracy Lukens sons, *Bryan, Jr.* (11) & *Parker* (6)

Marbeth Blocklinger grandsons, *Bryan, Jr.* (11) *Parker* (6)

Michele Dozier son, *Eric McCoy* (23)

Tash Jackson brother, *Peter Simmons, Jr.* (33)

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.

Pat McCullough for all the children

Mary Lou Harrison son ♥ *Scott* ♥ on his 21st anniversary 6/12.

LOVE GIFTS

Michael Gormish, in loving memory of my brother, *Douglas Moyer* (18)

Marjorie Fixter Randolph in loving memory of my beloved son, *Doug Fixter* (21) and in appreciation of the TCF Newsletters.

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 Gomez** frank@tcfvalleyforge.org

VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER BUTTERFLY RELEASE

UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP BUILDING AT THE GAZEBO IN KING OF PRUSSIA
SEPTEMBER 15, 2018 AT 3PM. EVERYONE OF ALL AGES ARE WELCOME.
The township building is diagonal to our monthly meeting place at Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church, on Valley Forge Road.



Gateway to
Hope and Healing

41st TCF National Conference
St. Louis, MO • July 27-29, 2018

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the 41st TCF National Conference on July 27-29, 2018. "Gateway to Hope and Healing" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of a great National Conference experience. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. We'll keep you updated with details here, on the national website as well as on our TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming

Adult Registration: \$115

Child Registration (9-17) \$55

Full-time College Student Registration \$55

Active Military Registration \$55

To help plan your time in St. Louis, view the general conference schedule. We also have a list of the Workshops available.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

TCF's discounted rate with the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel is \$140 per night plus tax. Reservations can now be made online or by calling the Marriott Reservation line at 800-397-1282. Please note that each attendee will only be able to reserve two rooms. If your group needs to reserve a larger block of rooms, please contact the National Office to make arrangements for your reservations.

Transportation to/from the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel to/from the St. Louis Lambert International Airport (approximately 15 miles)

GO BEST Express 877-785-4682: \$21.00 one way

Estimated taxi fare: \$40.00 one way

Bus service: \$7.00 one way

Subway service: \$3.50 one way

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.**

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Nina Ansel, daughter *Jenny* 7/27
Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* 7/1
Loretta Bovell, daughter *JoAnna* 7/12
Carol & Ira Caplan, son *Julian* 7/7
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
Nancy Jones, grandson *Jeff* 7/2
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, mom's 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
Karen Pilcicki, son *Jeff* 7/2
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* 7/11
Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* 7/18
Tracey Robinson, son *Connor* 7/6
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

JULY BIRTHDAYS continued

Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* 7/27
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* 7/16
Lisa M Spinks, brother *Robert* 7/9
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* - 7/11
Joanne & Tom Christman, son *Kyle R. O'Neill* - 7/20
Catherine Dardozzi, 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

JULY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

- Carole Solomon**, niece *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
- Philip & Ilene Spector**, niece *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
- Donna White**, sister *Diane White* - 7/4
- Nancy Willis**, son *Alex* - 7/9
- Andy & Peg Yanoviak**, daughter *Elizabeth "Betsy" Hershman* - 7/5



CATCHING BUTTERFLIES

It often hurts to come upon reminders of my son.
Tho' often since I lost him,
I would search around for one.
Which always brought on sadness,
And the tears that I would shed.
Were caused by names or faces,
All things that I would dread.

This view of his intrigued me;
I wanted to hear more,
And learned that he took all of them
And carefully would store.
All of the reminders that I chose to push away.
He would tuck them deep down inside his heart each
and every day.

But then one day I came upon a man
Who'd lost his son.
I found that things I ran from,
He wouldn't even shun.
But rather he would treasure,
And I said I wondered why.
He told me that he called them
"Catching Butterflies."

Now a name or likeness,
When catching me off guard.
Does not upset me as it did,
and I don't find it hard.
For now, instead, I see these times as opportunities
To see my son awakened
In these new, fresh memories.

Dottie Williams, TCF Pittsburgh, PA

SHARED THOUGHTS ON FEAR

After losing a child or sibling, we quickly realize that we are very vulnerable to death. Those terrible tragedies that normally happened to other people have now come into our own home.

Before we even get through the stages of shock or denial, we fear losing another family member. Our interest in daily living and ourselves is at a very low ebb. Often the concern for surviving children or family members increases to the point of smothering them. If there are no other children, the concern frequently is transferred to the mate.

As my youngest surviving son once said, "Can I not live because my brother died?" (He was then 16, the age our Doug died in an auto accident.) This helped me to realize that robbing him of the carefree feeling that belongs to teenagers was wrong. I certainly did not want him to worry to the extent I did. As frightened as we are, we have to accept the fact we can not control or protect our children against all dangers. I chose to back off, and just prayed a lot.

The fear of "going crazy" is very common. I had this fear because I was not healing at the same rate as when my siblings and parents died. It would have been helpful had I been going to The Compassionate Friends, and known a bereaved parent's grief is different, and for me much longer and more intense. Even though the fear of suicide and going crazy is very common, I have never known a bereaved parent who attended The Compassionate Friends to do either.

If we share our grief and pain with someone who has been in the same depth of despair, they can sometimes help us to sort out our feelings. The long time bereaved parents and siblings can help us through our bad times, just by letting us know they "were there" and survived. They too had intense exaggerated fears, which eventually left. A certain residue of fear remains with us, but this degree of fear we can live with.

Sharing is probably the one thing that helps us most. It helps us to look at ourselves more objectively, and sometimes realize when we are unduly alarmed. We fear forgetting our child, how they looked, laughed, their voice, and the things they did, we can't bear losing anything pertaining to our child, but **these things we never forget.**

Our children are no longer with us to touch and hold, but our love and memories are very much alive. It bothers me terribly when others say, "but you have six other children left". Our love for our child that died can not be transferred to another. Our relationship was between the two of us. Some people say a part of them died with their child. I like to say a part of me is reserved for the memories of Doug. This is its only function. So I need to keep the memories alive to use this part of me.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

AFTER THE STORM COMES THE RAINBOW

Happiness does not depend on what happens outside of you, but rather on what happens inside of you. It is measured by the spirit in which you meet the problems of life.

The master secret of happiness is to meet the challenge of each new day in remembering to look for the rainbows as assurance God is with us through the storms of life.

Author Unknown - TCF, Holmdel, NJ

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS FROM BEREAVED SIBLINGS

All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control crying.

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.

You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy.

Am I ?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

Author Unknown

I'M MISSING YOU

I'm missing you -

All day, ever day.

On a bright summer morning, or

When the moon is full.

In the golden days of fall,

As the storm clouds build and it's snowing

When the willows begin to turn green -

You are always with me,

In my mind and in my heart.

My brother, My Good Friend.

I'm missing you.

Kris Cunningham, TCF Moro, IL

A lot of time!

A little space,

A kind of quiet

Resting place,

Are what I need

At times like these,

A special spot

Where I can grieve.

Beth Pinion TCF - Andalusia, AL

“My friend just died. I don't know what to do.”

I'm old. What that means is that I've survived (so far) and a lot of people I've known and loved did not.

I've lost friends, best friends, acquaintances, co-workers, grandparents, mom, relatives, teachers, mentors, students, neighbors, and a host of other folks. I have no children, and I can't imagine the pain it must be to lose a child. But here's my two cents.

I wish I could say you get used to people dying. But I never did. I don't want to. It tears a hole through me whenever somebody I love dies, no matter the circumstances. But I don't want it to “not matter”. I don't want it to be something that just passes. My scars are a testament to the love and the relationship that I had for and with that person. And if the scar is deep, so was the love. So be it.

Scars are a testament to life. Scars are a testament that I can love deeply and live deeply and be cut, or even gouged, and that I can heal and continue to live and continue to love. And the scar tissue is stronger than the original flesh ever was. Scars are a testament to life. Scars are only ugly to people who can't see.

As for grief, you'll find it comes in waves. When the ship is first wrecked, you're drowning, with wreckage all around you. Everything floating around you reminds you of the beauty and the magnificence of the ship that was, and is no more. And all you can do is float. You find some piece of the wreckage and you hang on for a while. Maybe it's some physical thing. Maybe it's a happy memory or a photograph. Maybe it's a person who is also floating. For a while, all you can do is float. Stay alive.

In the beginning, the waves are 100 feet tall and crash over you without mercy. They come 10 seconds apart and don't even give you time to catch your breath. All you can do is hang on and float. After a while, maybe weeks, maybe months, you'll find the waves are still 100 feet tall, but they come further apart. When they come, they still crash all over you and wipe you out. But in between, you can breathe, you can function. You never know what's going to trigger the grief. It might be a song, a picture, a street intersection, the smell of a cup of coffee. It can be just about anything...and the wave comes crashing. But in between waves, there is life.

Somewhere down the line, and it's different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall. Or 50 feet tall. And while they still come, they come further apart. You can see them coming. An anniversary, a birthday, or Christmas, or landing at O'Hare. You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself. And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you'll come out.

Take it from an old guy. The waves never stop coming, and somehow you don't really want them to. But you learn that you'll survive them. And other waves will come. And you'll survive them too.

If you're lucky, you'll have lots of scars from lots of loves. And lots of shipwrecks.

Author Unkown

Submitted by: **Dale Pearlstein**

From one who has experienced many losses,
I think this describes grief.

Some Common Thoughts Following the Death of Your Child

- It is not uncommon to feel bitterness or a sense of injustice when one loses a child. So if you find yourself thinking, Why me?, Why my child?, Why our family?, You are in good company.
- Some parents describe “an irrational sense of self-blame” following the death of a child. I never was able to figure out what a rational sense of self-blame might be. But I do know that many of us blame ourselves. We replay the what-ifs of our child’s life and death a thousand times a day. Almost always self-blame is misplaced.
- Grief over the loss of a child lasts longer than any other kind. It heals more slowly and causes the most monumental disruption for those who survive. This is because a child is a part of what psychologists call our internal psychological structure - meaning that in a way, part of the parent dies too.
- Most experts believe that loss and helplessness are the greatest tests any human can face. A child’s death is off the charts in both categories.
- You may be strong, smart, and highly resilient. But nothing can prepare you for the loss of a child.
- One reason the loss feels so enormous is that a child’s death violates an implicit generational contract that our own children will survive us.
- A child’s death also challenges the fundamental instinct of parents to protect their child. That is what we are supposed to do, isn’t it? To make the world safe? The feeling that we have failed to do so can haunt us, compounding our sadness.
- In an era of medical miracles, we are less culturally conditioned to expect a child’s death than in previous generations. On the contrary, the prevailing assumption is that science and technology can and will work wonders.
- Some experts estimate that in the face of a child’s death two years is a reasonable grieving period. Others double that figure. The truth is, it takes as long as it takes - sometimes a whole lifetime. But if you are lucky, the grief will transmute. Even its physical properties will transform. Its weighty presence abates. The grief becomes gentler - less terrifying - and sometimes, paradoxically, rather sweet.

Taken from *After the Darkest Hour the Sun will Shine Again*
By **Elizabeth Mehren**



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
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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