



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JUNE 2014

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 Fellowship 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

June 5 - General Sharing

July 3 - General Sharing & Death by Suicide

**July 11-13 37th Compassionate Friends
National Conference, Chicago.**

**Sept 13, 2PM Upper Merion Township building
King of Prussia**

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.

Mek Wagner in honor of my daughter **Paige's** anniversary May 13th

Marie & Ken Hofmockel in memory of our grandson,
Steven Schneibolk, on his birthday May 7th

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

Martha & Albert Caesar in memory of our son, **Dan's** anniversary May 13th.

Rose Cote & Germaine Weaver in memory of our son/brother **Mark's** birthday June 3rd. and our husband/father **Paul's** anniversary May 27th.

The John E. Kostic Foundation, (Eileen & John Kostic) in memory of our son, **John**, who passed away Nov. 18th.

Margaret & Matthew Strickler & David, Andrew & Ted in memory our son/brother, **Tim's** birthday May 4th. Love & miss you so much, Mom, Dad & brothers David, Andrew & Ted.

BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM Saturday, September 13, 2014 at 2PM

Upper Merion Township Park

175 West Valley Forge Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406

Additional information to follow in the July newsletter

And on the Valley Forge website. www.tcfvalleyforge.org

Everyone Welcome - Bring a Friend

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 fgomez@hybridpoplars.com**

The Compassionate Friends National Conference



37th National Conference
Chicago, Illinois
July 11-13, 2014

Chicago, Illinois will be the site of the 37th TCF National Conference on July 11-13, 2014. "Miles of Compassion through The Winds of Hope" is the theme of this year's event, which promises more of last year's great national conference experience. The 2014 conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont, just minutes from the airport. The national website, as well as on the TCF/USA Facebook Page will keep you updated. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

CONFERENCE AND HOTEL REGISTRATION

To obtain a conference registration form, you may contact our Chapter Leader, Rhonda Gomez (contact information on page 1). You may also go to the TCF National website www.compassionatefriends.org or contact the TCF National Office by phone at 877-969-0010 (toll free) to help you obtain a registration form.

The hotel reservation is separate from the conference registration, and must be made directly to the hotel. The Hyatt Regency O'Hare, 9300 Bryn Mawr Ave., Rosemont, IL 60018, is now accepting reservations for TCF's National Conference. Conference attendees are receiving a discounted room rate. You must identify yourself as a TCF member. Conference attendees will also receive a discounted parking rate of \$10 per day. We anticipate a large attendance for the conference, so we encourage you to make your reservation as soon as it is convenient for you. Reservations can also be made by calling the hotel directly at 888-421-1442 and please mention The Compassionate Friends when reserving your room.

Please visit Rosemont's website, www.rosemont.com, for information on local area dining and activities.

Volunteers

Volunteers are always needed for this very special conference. If you would like to volunteer, please call the National Office at 877-969-0010 (toll free).

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.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Gary & Phyllis Adler, son *Matthew* 6/15
Emily L. Alm, son *Bryan W. Alm* 6/3
Julie Beasley, son *Aaron* 6/4
Lisa Bellopede, son *Johnny* 6/24
Lisa Bledy, sister *Danielle Bledy* 6/2
Jeff & Donna Brown, son *Kenneth Bernstiel* 6/2
Suzanne Carcarey, son *Eddie* 6/22
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Tom* 6/29
Rose Marie Cote, son *Mark J. Cote* 6/3
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver, brother *Mark Cote* 6/3
Barbara Cotteta, granddaughter *Denise* 6/11
Helen Deery, son *Ronald J. Deery, Jr.* 6/2
Susan Dehlinger, daughter *Amy M. Dehlinger* 6/21
Susan Dillman, daughter *Heather Lynne Dillman* 6/4
Shirley & Herb Druker, daughter *Heidi* 6/11
Colleen and Dan Fledderman, daughter *Amy* 6/2
Denise & Edward Frazier, son *Akhir* 6/3
Dave Gemmell, son *Stephen* 6/26
Carolyn & Allen Gephart, son *Joseph Malec* 6/11
Craig & Kathleen Gerland, daughter *Alexis* 6/20
Linda & Steven Gilbert, daughter *Pamela Gilbert* 6/28
Thomas & Anne Glenn, daughter *Lauren Glenn* 6/10
Herb & Karen Grant, son *Shaun* 6/13
Robert & Kathleen Grossi, son *James Michael Grossi* 6/30
Ronald J. & Margaret Halas, daughter *Desiree A. Halas* 6/2
Jack & Dee Heil, daughter *Susan Lynn Dina* 6/4
Nancy Lee & Jerry Hess, son *Jerry R.L. Hess* 6/30
Mark & Vicki Hoffman, son *Eric Daniel Hoffman* 6/4
Tammy & Allen Howard, daughter *Brianna Nicole Howard* 6/9
Carl and Dorothy Johnson-Speight, son *Khaaliq Jabbar Johnson* 6/26
Janet & Dave Keller, son *Joseph E. Keller* 6/1
Teresa & Bill Lattanze, son *William Noel Lattanze* 6/10
Susan & Richard Leimbach, son *Sean Duffy* 6/4
Susan Leonard, grandson *Nathan* 6/3
Greg & Anita Lewicki, son *Eric Stephen Lewicki* 6/1
Carl & Josie Malitsky, daughter *Cynthia Malitsky* 6/27
Norine & William McDevitt, Jr, son *Sean Francis McDevitt* 6/29
Elaine Marino, 'daughter in law' *Lisa Marino* 6/1
Barbara McClenahan, son *David McClenahan* 6/28

JUNE BIRTHDAYS continued

Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter *Renee Meisenhelder* 6/20
Kathleen Mitchel, son *Steven* 6/25
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Thomas Patrick Murphy* 6/16
George & Estelle Null, daughter *Kathleen "Kathy" Null* 6/18
Thomas & Demetra Patukas, son *George Thomas Patukas* 6/12
Michele Paul, sister *Desiree Halas* 6/2
Kathy & Jim Petrokubi, son *Andrew* 6/20
Tony & Laurene Quercetti, daughter *Christine L. Quercetti* 6/5
Marge Randolph, son *Doug Fixter* 6/19
Ron & Sandy Ruth, son *Brian David Ruth* 6/15
Beth Schad, son *Gage* 6/5
Donna & Eric Schaertl, son *Jared M. Schaertl* 6/14
Suzanne Schoenhut, son *Joe* 6/29
Anna Schwarz, son *Jerrold Schwarz* 6/11
Ann Sherwood, daughter *Martha Sherwood Fransway* 6/8
Matthew Silverman, sister *Avery Silverman* 6/23
Howard & Margorie Silverman, daughter *Avery Silverman* 6/23
Sheila & Jim Smith, son *Seth Richter* 6/10
Karl & Sue Snepp, son *Dave Snepp* 6/28
Carole Solomon, niece *Avery Silverman* 6/23
Philip & Ilene Spector, neice *Avery Silverman* 6/23
Gerard & Jane Thimm, son *Gary Thimm* 6/18
Allan Thomas, son *Tommy Odins* 6/22
Mary Walker, daughter *Susan* 6/28
Alice Weaver, daughter *Kristen* 6/7
Kevin Welde, brother *John Welde* 6/6
Laurie Wyche, son *Jameson Wyche* 6/27

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

Chris Aiello, brother *Louis* - 6/16
Jim & Michelle Angelini, son *Danny* - 6/25
Shirley & Lex Bono, son *Greg* - 6/13
Robyn Buseman, daughter *Maya Buseman-Williams* - 6/28
Chris Carlton, brother *Eric* - 6/17
Hazel Corbin, daughter *Dayle C Rutledge* - 6/18
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Daniel J. Cornely* - 6/24
Evelyn M. Corrado, son *John A. Corrado* - 6/9
Alex Crisanti, Jr., son *John Crisanti* - 6/3
Joanne De Felice, son *Joseph* - 6/27
Robert Dilbeck, wife *Dolores Dilbeck* - 6/18
Jim & Ruth Fairley, son *David Fairley* - 6/27
Bill & Karen Flavin, son *Chad Flavin* - 6/18
Carol Fritz, daughter *Kate Pawlowski* - 6/6
Marco & Patricia Giubilato, daughter *Robin Giubilato Zarelli* - 6/9

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

SHARED THOUGHTS ON MEN ALSO NEED SUPPORT

Men tend to be less verbal about their agony of losing a child or sibling, which results in the misunderstanding that they feel less pain. The Valley Forge Chapter is very fortunate to have men who attend meeting and speak of their loss. It helps to erase the myth that men are emotionally stronger, which has put unrealistic expectations on them, and prevented their reaching out for support. The depth of grief is not proportionate to a gender. It is unfair to assume a father's parental attachment is less than a mother's. When society expects more of men than they are capable, it lowers their self-esteem, and can make them feel they are not meeting their obligation. No one should ever feel obligated to be a pillar of strength for another family member. Each has the ultimate load they can bear. It helps to share our grief, when we can do so without putting expectations on another.

Father's Day is a tough day for our men. They need the same love and compassion, we mothers do on Mother's Day. We tend to measure our parental worth on these special days. We often come up short, for we bereaved parents tend to lay every possible guilt our imagination can conjure up on ourselves. If we can not find a realistic failure, we can always feel guilty for breathing while our child is dead. I consider a big turning point in my grief when I could say "I did the best I could do, and that is good enough". If our children were as great as we say they were (and we know they were), I'll bet some of those traits were nurtured by the parents. We need to take some credit for the good things in their life. We wish all our father's the best day you can possibly have this Father's Day, and hope you feel pride in being a father to your child.

June can also be a tough month at graduation time. Any school related event stirs up emotions for most of us. For many years, I found June to be the toughest month of all. Our son Doug was a sophomore in high school when he died, each year I relived the "he would have been". For some it is elementary or high school, others it is college, regardless of the stage of life our child or sibling was in when they left us, our grief seems to intensify at the next anticipated hurdle they would have achieved. We mourn the loss of our future dreams, as well as the physical loss of our child or sibling.

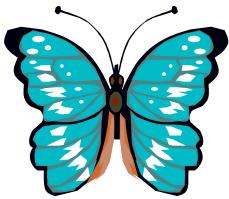
Our grief will take more time and energy than those around us could ever imagine. The lack of understanding our grief, can cause us to feel detached from family and friends. It is vital to our well being to find someone to share our grief with. Other bereaved parents and siblings have many of the same grief symptoms, know the depth of despair, and our need for help. More seasoned bereaved families can help us get through our bad days by showing us there is light at the end of the tunnel, and how we can become stronger than we ever expected to be.

THOUGHTS OF DOUG

His spirit's here, or is it gone?
It left a while ago.
Sometimes I feel him by my side,
and then I feel him go.
He follows me and gives me strength,
then leaves for some far place.
And then again behind the door,
I think I see his face.
He stays so near, I think because,
he left some things undone.

Some things to see, some words to say,
a race that wasn't run.
But soon he'll have to leave this earth,
and find a place on high.
For this is not a spirit's life,
but where a man must die.

Kevin Hofmockel
(written 2 months after his
brother Doug's death)



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.

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."

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.

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

MISSING GRADUATE

Parents happy faces all around me,
With a glow from within,
Pomp and Circumstance is playing,
Now the program will begin.
The graduates are lined up,
They are coming down the aisle,
Some have serious faces, yet
Some have a little smile.
I look down the aisle,
Hoping for your face to come into sight,
This is your class,
It was to be your graduation night.
All the graduates pass by,
But none of them are you.

A tug of my heart tells me,
You are not here, your death is true.
God called you home...
I wanted you here in such a bad way.
Looking into your classmates' faces
Do they recall you, missing this day?
Memories, sweet memories,
Now fill my mind and heart.
There will be no golden tassel
This day for my Sweetheart.
The Class is oh! so happy,
This isn't the time to be blue.
Now I must go shake a hand
And get a hug or two.

*Emma Valenteen
TCF Phoenixville, PA*

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 heart aches.

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, Valley Forge, PA

for her sister, **Katie Santoleri** 6/5/81 - 8/14/92

A YEAR OF GRIEF

It has been a year,
Since you went away.
Time goes by so slowly.
I never knew so much pain,
Along with fear and emptiness,
Could be felt by anyone.
Your death has sent me into
A darkness and void,
Words can't describe.
I never knew I could cry
"Til there were no more tears.
But these came unannounced.
The price of loving a brother,
As special as you,
Will take me a lifetime to pay.
My pain hasn't been for me only,
For friends don't want to see
The cost of loving and losing.

They say get on with your life --
But they don't understand,
How big a part of my life you were.
So I will take my pain,
Along with my special memories,
And live day by day.
These memories from happier days,
Are all I have of you now.
So I will place them first in my heart.
If I was given a choice,
Knowing the pain and devastation
That I feel today,
I would still want you
To be my big brother to love.
For memories can't be taken away.

*Greta Sharpe (Sibling)
Andalusia, AL -- TCF*

HEALING A FATHER'S GRIEF

ROLE PROBLEMS

Macho Man: "Big boys don't cry." So it begins in childhood - the suggestion that a man must always be strong, not showing softness, weakness, or tears. Reinforcing images continue within the family - father does not cry. And everywhere outside the family the boy sees what is supposed to be the desirable male - big, strong, like steel, and never crying. He sees him on television and movie screens, tough John Wayne in a hundred variations. He sees him in the advertisements and on the sports field. He sees him popular with the girls, at the school dance. By adulthood, the role is deeply into his mind.

Whatever may be said for or against this macho role, it definitely interferes with grieving. The emotions of grief are real and need to be expressed. The feelings of sadness and loss are overwhelming, but what is a strong man to do with them? What outlets are available to him? When the lump comes in the throat and moisture in the eyes, does he surrender and cry? Probably not, especially if other people are around. The conditioning interferes, the tears are checked, and attention is turned to something else.

The situation may be made worse by comments of friends, such as, "Fred, you're really handling this thing well - keep a stiff upper lip!" or "It's good to see you holding up - someone has to be strong through this whole thing!" or "George, How's your wife doing?" This is social conditioning at work - others reinforcing the role expectations for the grieving father.

OVERCOMING ROLE PROBLEMS

Cry: Crying is the most effective, efficient way to handle the emotions of grief. Learn how to cry. If you think that you cannot, remember that you still have the same tear ducts you had as a child. They have not dried up. If there is anything worth using them for, surely this is it.

I had trouble crying. True, I cried at the hospital when I learned my son was going to die. I cried at the funeral. But I did not cry again until 18 months later. One Saturday when I was home alone, I walked past a picture of David taken on our last vacation. Overwhelming sadness hit me. I sat down and cried for half an hour. I could not believe it. After I cried, I actually felt better. Some of the tension inside had been relieved. On each of the next three weekends the same thing happened. No one knew. I was always alone. I only told my wife several months later, which shows how sensitive I still was about crying.

A helpful technique was given to me by a grief counselor (Iris Bolton). When you feel choked up, with tears in your eyes and a lump in your throat, but you cannot actually cry, pant rapidly. The short breaths make crying easier. Many bereaved fathers have used this panting exercise while deliberately recalling a memory. As in my case, a picture may do it. Some go to a particular place or find their child's favorite toy. Others use sports equipment, certain music, or something drawn or written by the child. Every father will have something meaningful that can be used as a catalyst.

William H. Schatz

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.**

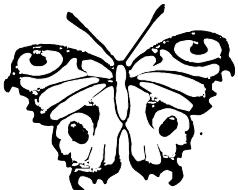


**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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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