



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

MARCH 2015

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

Mar 5 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Apr 2 General Sharing

July 10-12 TCF National Conference, Dallas, TX
See page 3

Oct 9-11 2015 E. PA Regional Conference
See page 3 for information

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 MEMBERS

Loretta Bovell, daughter **JoAnna** (34)

Maureen Butler, son **Terence** (38)

B. Brooke Hackman, son **Brian** (27)

Giuliana Hilend, son **Patrick** (24)

Lori Joseph, son **Andy** (20)

Andrew Randolph, brother **James** (31)

Catherine & Gerry St. John, sons **Greg** (47) & **Gerry** (43)

Linda & John Wilson, son **Sean** (23)

REFRESHMENTS

Patricia & Lee Grossman in honor of our daughter, **Rachel Leah** on her birthday 2/2.

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

Rose Marie Cote in loving memory of my son, **Mark J. Cote** on his anniversary 3/26.

Janie & Joseph Dougherty in loving memory of our son, **Brendan** on his birthday 3/29.

Marcia & Harold Epstein in loving memory of our grandson,

Andrew Voluck on his anniversary 2/9.

Patricia & Marco Giubilato in loving memory of our daughter,

Robyn Giubilato Zarelli on her birthday 3/18.

Freda & Jack Gross in loving memory of our daughter, **Linda Joy Gross**

on her birthday 2/25. Always in our hearts & prayers.

Shirley & Phil Kennedy and Sean & family in memory of our son & brother,

Phillip V. Kennedy on his birthday 2/22.

We miss him more & more as each year goes by.

Audrey Morasco In loving memory of my dear son, **Christopher** on his birthday 2/22.

Susan Pollock in loving memory of my son, **Brendan Rosleo** (22).

Rusty & Anthony Puglisi in loving memory of our son, **Michael** on his birthday 3/5.

Art & Nancy Singer in loving memory of our son,

Jeffrey Vincent Singer on his birthday 3/9.

Those we love don't go away,
they walk beside us every day.

Unseen, unheard, but always near,
still loved, still missed, and very dear.

Author Unknown

Submitted by **Rusty Puglisi**

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

As you know a Regional Conference is being planned for October 9-11, 2015 at the Radisson Hotel in King of Prussia, PA.

We hope you will take the opportunity to share the conference weekend with us. It will be an indescribable experience with bereaved families who have "been there", and know the depth of the pain. There are no strangers, or social barriers, everyone becomes an instant friend. We share our emotional feelings with one another.

There will be seasoned bereaved families, who have proven life can be meaningful once more. They have learned to love, laugh, and live again, and know the love and memories of our children and siblings have not diminished.

If you are interested in serving on the planning committee, please join us at the next planning meeting scheduled for March 15, 1:30PM. This, and all planning meetings, will be held at the Radisson Hotel, King of Prussia, PA.

38th NATIONAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Is available by mail from:
PO Box 3693, Oak Brook, IL, 60522-3696
or call:
877-969-0010 or FAX 630-990-0246

On line registration available at www.compassionatefriends.org

The Compassionate Friends National Conference 2015



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.**

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Dardozzi, son *James Dardozzi* 3/7
Janie & Joseph Dougherty, son *Brendan K. Dougherty* 3/29
Richard & Martha Fenoglio, daughter *Judith Fenoglio Daw* 3/30
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* 3/26
Bill & Karen Flavin, son *Chad Flavin* 3/7
Lisa Foos, son *Curtis* 3/14
Jo Ann Gatlin, daughter *Lisa Diane Gatlin* 3/20
Marco & Patricia Giubilato, daughter *Robin Giubilato Zarelli* 3/18
Danielle & Joshua Graham, brother *Jake* 3/27
Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Kathleen Heiss McCaughan* 3/25
Margaret C Jones, son *Christopher* 3/17
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* 3/11
Terry Kozlewski, son *Frankie* 3/12
Tracey-Anne Langley, sister *Nataly* 3/25
Julie Lauderback, son *Donovan Lauderback* 3/5
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* 3/17
Vivian & Kenneth Maahs, daughter *Kirsten* 3/22
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* 3/9
Tom & Charmaine Malik, son *Danny Malik* 3/3
Laurie, Lee, Samantha Maxwell, son, son, brother *Dan* 3/14
Jeff and Kathy McCarron, daughter *Sarah* 3/30
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* 3/11
Greg and Mary Miller, son *David* 3/26
Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* 3/18
John Mscisz, grandson *Liam John Willamson* 3/8
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* 3/3
Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J.* 3/27
Terri Pfeiffer, son *Matthew* 3/6
Raymond & Marguerite Posluszny, son *Alex Posluszny* 3/22
Lyla T. Poulson, daughter *Kimberly Poulson* 3/4
Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* 3/5
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* 3/24
Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* 3/26
Lisa and John Russo, son *Casey* 3/17

MARCH BIRTHDAYS continued

Susan & John Rutland, son *Justin Rutland* 3/28
Carol Sannella, son *David Sannella* 3/18
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Christopher Harvey* 3/5
Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* 3/9
Jeffrey Smith, son *Jacob Smith* 3/2
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* 3/25
Allan Thomas, son *Vernon Odins* 3/5
Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* 3/18
Patti Wall, son *Stephen Wall* 3/14
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* 3/8
Theresa Wigand, daughter *Dawn* 3/7
Mary Willinger, sister *Annette* 3/6
Carolyn & Tom Yuhas, son *Eric Whitelock* 3/4
Judi Zollers, son *Sam* 3/6

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua, son *Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua* - 3/27
Wilma Bordetsky, daughter *Noreen Bordetsky Cook* - 3/24
Loretta Bovell, daughter *JoAnna* - 3/7
Gary Chavez, wife *JoAnn* - 3/31
Rose Marie Cote, son *Mark J. Cote* - 3/26
Jamie Cote Weaver, brother *Mark Cote* - 3/26
Barbara Cotteta, granddaughter *Denise* - 3/28
Linda DiPasquale, son *Thomas* - 3/24
Ginny Ebert, son *Jason* - 3/25
Tom & Irene Edmunds, son *Kyle Derek Edmunds* - 3/17
Bob & Dena Filipone, daughter *Denise* - 3/8
Rita Gibbons, son *Paul Gibbons* - 3/20
Herb & Karen Grant, son *Ryan* - 3/8
Ronald J. & Margaret Halas, daughter *Desiree A. Halas* - 3/11
Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* - 3/10
Brad Ingerman, son *Justin* - 3/18
Michael & Betsy Jarrett, son *Michael Jarrett* - 3/10
Jacquie Kilroy, son *Shilen Kenneth* - 3/21
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter *Danelle Rossi* - 3/12
Susan Lipson, nephew *Justin Ingerman* - 3/18
Elaine & James Madden, son *Andrew Madden* - 3/6
Lorelei Malandra, brother *Jeff Singer* - 3/9
Dan Markle, brother *Matt Markle* - 3/3
Anne McClenachan, brother *Andy McClenachan* - 3/30

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

- Kevin & Nancy McKelvey, son *Michael* - 3/30
 - Barbara Meisenhelder, daughter *Renee Meisenhelder* - 3/2
 - Bob & Janet Milnazik, daughter *Kim* - 3/3
 - Beth Mohr, brother *Matthew Bock* - 3/16
 - Ann Murray, son *Brian Rapoport* - 3/9
 - George & Estelle Null, daughter *Kathleen "Kathy" Null* - 3/7
 - Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son *Richard H. Owens, Jr.* - 3/26
 - Michele Paul, sister *Desiree Halas* - 3/11
 - Thomas & Mary Jane Poore, son *Bradley Poore* - 3/19
 - Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* - 3/8
 - Becky Rotkowski, brother *Brian* - 3/14
 - Arthur & Nancy Singer, son *Jeffrey Vincent Singer* - 3/9
 - James & Betty Treichler, son *James Treichler Jr.* - 3/13
 - Akhil & Judy Tripathi, son *Sunil* - 3/17
 - Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* - 3/16
 - Hans & Margaret van Naerssen, son *Eric* - 3/25
 - Linda Weaver, son *Damon Weaver* - 3/18
 - Laurie Wyche, son *Jameson Wyche* - 3/1
 - Pat Zimmerman, daughter *Gabrielle* - 3/23
-

Grief's Garden

Tears of sorrow have no pardon.
 They water the memories
 of my hearts garden.

Blossoms with seeds
 of sadness and joy.
 Seasons long, seasons brief,
 Sixteen years
 in my garden of grief.

A path that is watered by tears,
 That time does not pardon,
 after all the years.

River of Tears

River of Tears
 Crest to Flood.
 My River of Tears,
 sixteen long years.

Over Rapids and Falls
 Sad with Grief.
 Tears for times of disbelief.

Times never again to be,
 leaving only past memory.

Gone from this earth
 to peace and rest,
 In heaven to be
 eternally blessed.

A Mother's Broken Heart

Time gone,
 sixteen years,
 measured in
 the River of Tears.

Loosing a child breaks
 a mother's heart.
 Leaving forever
 a missing part.

Acceptance ??
 Does it ever come?
 Does sixteen years
 add up that sum?

Until then,
 memories will stay.
 She will embrace you
 in heaven some day.

Rose Marie Cote, TCF Valley Forge, PA
 In loving memory of my son, *Mark* on his anniversary 3/26

SHARED THOUGHTS ON CARING FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Frequently, the change of seasons adds to our depression. In the spring, we look forward to the new plant life popping up all around us, bearing the fact its dormant life was only temporary. Often, when the evidence of spring does not lift our spirits as it has in the past, it iterates to the low level our depression has descended. We begin to question why our beloved children and siblings can not return to us. It can even make us feel we are less important than the nature we view.

When we are in the pit of depression, we can not see beyond our loss. It is important to have someone who will not immediately encourage us to see a doctor to prescribe anti-depressant drugs, so they can shift the responsibility of helping us to someone else. We need someone who is willing to listen to our rambling and repetitive talking about our loss, and will not pass judgment, even though they do not understand us. But hopefully, they will gently encourage positive thinking. We need to be accepted for what little we can give in return. When we lean on those who help us, it is essential to let them know we are doing the best we can in our very abnormal situation, and appreciate their allowing us to talk about that which is very healing in our grief.

Relationships with our family members, are also important. Our remaining children need to know they are as equally important, and loved as much as our deceased. By putting our deceased child on a high pedestal, the remaining siblings can feel they are not as precious to us. It is best to be verbal, and not assume they understand our feelings. It is very normal for siblings to find more comfort in sharing with friends, or other siblings, rather than parents. It is too much for them to take on their parent's grief, and it hurts too much to see parents cry. They have had both the terrible loss of a sibling and a stable parent (as they knew them), and they too, are fragile.

The marriage is under tremendous strain. Both are so overwhelmed with grief, and don't have the strength to support the other. It is like leaning on a bent twig. If we harbor little grievances, all sorts of held in resentment may surface, exploding into serious problems. Most sexual relations habits will change, and frequently, in opposite directions. It is important to try and resolve continued absence of sexual relationships. This takes communicating with one another. A spouse can not fully understand or solve their mate's grief, but we must accept each other's style of grieving. The accusation of blaming a mate for the death is probably the most damaging of all. If this continues to smolder, it may be helpful to include a third party, such as a psychiatrist, pastor, or some form of grief counselor. No bereaved parent can handle being accused of their child's death. We must attempt a resolution, we can't afford to lose our marriage along with our child. Sometimes an experienced grief specialist can help clear our vision. It is very normal to blame someone for the death. But, most often in a family situation, the death could not have been prevented, or the party being accused was acting to the best of their ability. We must forgive, for they also loved the deceased, and are hurting badly.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmocker*, TCF Valley Forge

"Commitment to life and living for yourself, spouse and family; and commitment to your child's memory are four choices you must make. Each one requires perserverance and patience. Failure to make these commitments will extend the tragedy by increasing the loss."

Nancy Hogan

THOUGHTS FROM A PARENT WHO LOST AN OLDER CHILD

Perhaps, I had my child longer than you had yours, but thirty-eight years does not seem long. Perhaps, there are more memories to hold in my heart, but I know yours are just as dear to you as mine are to me even if your memories are memories of only one or two days.

Your dreams for your child are gone. So are mine. Never did I imagine that I would have to deal with my child's death instead of him having to deal with mine.

In thirty-eight years there was time to give me a legacy of three grandchildren. This is a very special blessing and one that I do not take for granted.

My child died from a terminal illness that is not one of the 'acceptable' diseases. My child died of alcohol and drug addiction. The tools for remission of this disease are place in the hands of the person who has the disease. Even with help of four treatment centers the recovery was not to be.

One day at a time my recovery is taking place. The pain, after two and one half years has gone to a place where it can be tolerated. My mission is to sustain the relationship with my three granddaughters who now live three thousand miles away from me.

My story and my age may be different from yours, but the bottom line is the same! My child has gone to a place where I cannot go and I miss him so much. The pain of grief is still there, but I am living life one day at a time enriched because my son came through my body into my life.

Helen Godwin, TCF – Orange Park – Jacksonville Chapter

RISKS

To laugh...is to risk appearing the fool
To weep...is to risk appearing sentimental
To reach out for another...is to risk involvement
To expose feelings...is to risk exposing your true self
To place ideas, your dreams before a crowd...is to risk their loss
To love...is to risk not being loved in return
To live...is to risk despair
To try...is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing
The person, who risks nothing, does nothing...has nothing...and is nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn...feel...change...grow...love...live
Chained by their certitude's, they are a slave, they have forfeited their freedoms
Only a person who risks is free. *Author Unknown*

**“Who can so softly bind up the wound of another,
as he who has felt the same wound himself.”**

Thomas Jefferson

PROUD RAIN

Every night I'd want it to rain.
So I could be depressed and dwell on my pain.
Tonight it's pouring, but I have no more tears.
Have I cast away my sadness, and fought against my fears?
Each day gives me another chance, another chance to change.
Today might be the day that I'll take center stage.
Everything's so dark, and at times I feel alone.
I wonder when will that star come to light my way home?
I'm not sure if I've found it, or if my path is clear.
I don't know now all these thoughts came out with only a single tear.
My hopes and dreams give me faith.
I'm guiding myself, searching for my strength.
I have my own voice, I just need to speak out loud.
I need to say good-bye to rainy days, and believe I can make myself proud.

In memory of my brother Stephen Andrew Schark, Jr. 6/11/80 - 12/10/99

Written by: *Alexis Noel*

THE BEAUTY IN LIFE

When the sun breaks through the darkest of skies
When a child asks you repeatedly, "Why?"
When you wake up in the morning with your dogs in your face
A long, beautiful gown, embroidered in lace
Waking up in the arms of your lover
A dark sky with stars that seem to just hover
A warm, sunny day that never seems to end
A broken heart that has started to mend
A hug from a loved one when you are feeling blue
The knowledge of praying and knowing that God hears you
Believing and knowing the ones we've lost are in a better place
Knowing that we will someday again see their face
The reality that God sent his Son to be born on this earth as a man
The fact that He died for our sins ~ knowing God does what He plans
The awareness that God is with us in times of heartache and strife
These are some of the things that can put the beauty in our life

Stacey Mastrocola Sullens, Valley Forge, PA
Written for my brother:
Peter A. Mastrocola, III 6/7/75 - 8/10/95

MY BIG BABY BROTHER

When I think about why you had to go away that bright August day,
 I wonder is it because God giveth and God taketh away?
 Or is it all just part of His divine and perfect plan ~
 A course we must follow though don't always understand?
 I must stop trying to question all the reasons why
 And just accept that you're in your new home in the sky.
 I've heard it said that trials and tribulations make us stronger,
 But all I know for sure is that each day without you seems longer.
 There's a place in my heart where emptiness knows no light,
 It's the void that was left when your body left my sight.
 I miss your smile, your laugh and your big crushing hugs,
 I miss your eyes and your nose and that adorable mug.
 But most of all I miss your contagious excitement and spirit,
 The kind that could make me smile if I were just near it.
 Do you know what an impact you made on the lives of us all?
 My precious brother, it's oh so much more than any other I can recall.
 We've learned and been told that you're in a much better place
 And I ponder with amazement that you can see His holy face.
 Oh, darling, there have been times I wish I was there, too;
 More than you know, I have wanted to be with you.
 I hold on to the truth that God's Word has provided ~
 That on one sweet day, we all once again will be reunited.
 Oh, Peter, I miss and love you and know there will never be another
 Man in my life like my sweet, big baby brother.
 Till that day, Pete ~ you are forever in my heart!

Stacey Mastrocola Sullens, Valley Forge, PA
 for brother, **Peter A. Mastrocola, III**
 June 7, 1975 - August 10, 1995
 Written for the 2nd anniversary of his Homegoing

FEELING FINE TODAY

I am feeling fine today,
 full of hope and warm and bright.
 All my grief seems gone away,
 and my memories are light.

Yes, I know this might not last
 But while laughter holds my hand,
 I will let it lift the past,
 I will let the gladness stand.

While this sunny moment brings
 beauty for my heart to touch,
 I will keep a thousand things,
 Right and good and blessed things,
 That I did forget...too much. *Sascha Wagner*

SPRING: HOPE OR MORE PAIN

Here it comes! Spring! Flowers blooming, weather warming, the cold of winter is behind us. We're coming up out of our pain, right? Wrong!

My six-year-old son Arthur was killed by an automobile on Friday, May 28, 1971. The Easter before was the last time we were together as a complete family. For years after, spring and especially the Easter season began the realization that we were no longer a complete family, and never would be again. Each year brought a new year of pain.

When the first spring came after Arthur was killed, I thought I would be better. Buds popped out and my sadness was deeper. Easter came, and my pain was no less. The temperature rose, but the coldness in my heart never left.

Many more springs came - and none of them brought the relief I prayed for. For me, the hope and renewal that was supposed to be a part of spring was a lie.

Ironically, though, the beginning of the resolution of my grief began in the spring of 1978. My grief, which by this time had become prolonged and distorted, created a number of other problems in my life. Among them, was the deterioration of my marriage.

We began seeing a marriage counselor. I couldn't believe it when he told me that it was not only acceptable, but necessary to face Arthur's death and talk about the pain and emotions I had been encouraged to suppress all these years.

Mine is a long story of struggle and determination, of steps and missteps, and pain and sadness and loss. But it is also a long story of change and growth. The beginning of the resolution of my grief may have started then, but it didn't all happen in spring. It took place over many seasons.

Various seasons are significant for all of us. The Christmas holidays may be significant for you. The middle of June for someone else. A colorful fall may be significant for another. But, for some reason, we are led to believe that spring will bring a lessening of our pain. This is not true. Spring is simply a time of year. It's a date. It's a season. It's symbolic. But, spring is not magic.

Yes, it holds promises, but those promises are only brought to fruition when we work at them. Spring can be the impetus for change. The changes that take place in nature can cause us to do what we need to do to resolve our grief. The beauty of spring can be the factor that encourages us to find beauty in our lives again. Yes, we see growth and change and renewal all around us in spring. But it won't happen for us unless we make it happen.

In early grief, we hardly see spring come. We are so immersed in our pain and desolation that it is hard to see anything. Just as winter comes before spring, dark painful grief work comes before we begin to see the light of comfortable life again. Don't expect to sidestep the healthy, albeit painful, normal, and long process of grief. Don't endow a season with magic to make changes in you. Hard grief work is what will get you to the other side of your child's death, not a date on the calendar.

Margaret Gerner, BP/USA
St. Louis, MO



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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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