

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month, at 7:45 PM (ending at 9:30 PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Founders Hall, Valley Forge Road and Henderson Rds., King of Prussia, PA.

For info call Rhonda (484) 919-0820

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of Interest.

Meeting - 3/2/2023

Next Meeting - 4/6/2023

The 46th Annual Conference will be July 7-9 2023 at Denver, Colorado. More details coming in near future.



March 2023

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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 editor.

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 the 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.

Please make all checks Payable to:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
Send to Rhonda Gomez

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.

NEW FRIENDS

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We all have 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. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love and understanding to all of you.

Paul Shoenberger

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.

The Chapter

LOVE GIFTS

Carol Sannella - In memory of son, David, and her husband, Robert.

Shirley Kennedy and Sean Kennedy - In memory son, Philip and brother.

We love and miss you. Mother and brother, Sean & family.

Marcella Rice — Donation for help defraying the cost of your Chapter's printing expense

Sigrid Hirschhorn — In memory of her daughter, Samantha

Susan Lawlor — In memory of her son, Jim Sinha

SEARCHING

Little by little time goes by,

Short if you sing, long if you sigh,

Note by note, life's music plays on,

Songs ever changing, but never gone.

Susan Lawlor, TCF Valley Forge

Chapter

Once again, my list has vanished;
it was here, but now it's missing.
Keys and glasses disappearing,
books and letters overdue.

I'm forever searching, searching,
they must be here, and I need them!
Could it be that what is missing,
what I want this very minute

could it be that what I'm really
searching for,

my child,
is you?

Joyce Andrews, TCF Sugar Land, TX

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

There is love in our pain ...

Memories in our grief ...

Hope in our sharing...

Author Unknown

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.

Anniversaries

Eileen & Tom Algeo - Megan - daughter - 3/22
 Jovanna & Joseph Bevilacqua - Donato Danny Bevilacqua - son - 3/27
 Loretta Bovell - JoAnna - daughter - 3/7
 Gary Chavez - JoAnn - wife - 3/31/1999 0:00:00,P
 Rose Marie Cote - Mark J. Cote - son - 3/26
 Barbara Cotteta - Denise - granddaughter - 3/28
 Joanne Devito - Domenico - grandson - 3/21
 Linda DiPasquale - Thomas - son - 3/24
 Michelle Dozier - Eric McCoy - son - 3/31
 Ginny Ebert - Jason - son - 3/25
 Tom & Irene Edmunds - Kyle Derek Edmunds - son - 3/17
 Bob & Dena Filipone - Denise - daughter - 3/8
 Kate Gara - Colin - godchild - 3/13
 Herb & Karen Grant - Ryan - son - 3/8
 Linda Haines - Zackary Monroe McCarthy - son - 3/24
 Ronald J. & Margaret Halas - Desiree A. Halas - daughter - 3/11
 Othell & William Heaney - Kevin - son - 3/10/1
 Michael & Betsy Jarrett - Michael Jarrett - son - 3/10
 Joan Kellett - Keith Mastronardo - grandson - 3/19
 Jacquie Kilroy - Shilen Kenneth - son - 3/21
 Suellen & Stephen King - Danelle Rossi - daughter - 3/12
 Susan Lipson - Justin Ingerman - nephew - 3/18
 Stacy Ludy - Alyssa Kenny - daughter - 3/1 - Anastasia - granddaughter - 3/10
 Ella Mack - Elizabeth - sister - 3/23
 Florence and Martin Mack - Martin III - son - 3/21
 Dan Markle - Matt Markle - brother - 3/3
 Shannon Mastronardo - Keith - son - 3/19
 Anne McClenachan - Andy McClenachan - brother - 3/30
 Kevin & Nancy McKelvey - Michael - son - 3/30
 Barbara Meisenhelder - Renee Meisenhelder - daughter - 3/2
 Bob & Janet Milnazik - Kim - daughter - 3/3
 Beth Mohr - Matthew Bock - brother - 3/16
 Ann Murray - Brian Rapoport - son - 3/9/
 George & Estelle Null - Kathleen Kathy Null - daughter - 3/7
 Betty & Richard Owens, Sr. - Richard H. Owens, Jr. - son - 3/26
 Thomas & Mary Jane Poore - Bradley Poore - son - 3/19
 Marcella Rice - Elise B. Rice - mother - 3/28
 Kelly Rossi - Kevin - brother - 3/8
 Becky Rotkowski - Brian - brother - 3/14

Anniversaries - Cont'd

Beverly & Joe Rush - Kelsey - daughter - 3/29
 Arthur & Nancy Singer - Jeffrey Vincent Singer - son - 3/9
 Melissa Toland - Connor Shepherd - son - 3/17
 Akhil & Judy Tripathi - Sunil - son - 3/17
 Peggy Tweed - Matthew Bock - son - 3/16
 Mary Walsh - Matthew - son - 3/2
 Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver - Mark Cote - brother - 3/26
 Laurie Wyche - Jameson Wyche - son - 3/12

ROOMS AND THINGS

How many people have suggested to you in subtle and not so subtle ways that you'd be better off if you'd only go ahead and get rid of your child's things and redo the room? You see, they think that the holding on to these things is morbid. These people, who have never suffered the loss of one of their children, really do not understand that you have to do your grief work, and whether you do this sad task now or later really doesn't affect the length or depth of your pain.

Some parents need to make the changes and decisions about personal belongings as soon as possible after the death. Having the chore ahead of them is more painful than the doing. These parents are advised, however, to go slowly when disposing of belongings. It may seem to you, also, that not seeing or having anything around to remind you of your dead child will somehow make your pain less. Later, though, when your grief has softened, you may find you need that special something, but by then it's too late.

On the other hand, you may try to keep everything, and it may take many months and several acts of sorting through the belongings at intervals before you're able to decide on just the special things you want to keep as mementos. As time goes by, you will be able to let go of the less important things without it ripping you to pieces. Not everything will forever have the same value for you. You may change in how you feel and find that it comforts instead of hurts to see your subsequent child wearing some of the baby's clothes, or that catching a glimpse of an old familiar shirt on one of your teenagers brings a warm feeling.

Whether you've made changes or haven't been able to make changes, it's okay. There is no rule about when you do it, so don't let well-meaning friends or relatives make you feel guilty because your needs don't meet their timetables. What we would like to suggest to you is, though there is no rules about when you do it, that you have as a goal eventually making the changes, otherwise the room and things become a shrine, and if you have surviving children or a spouse that may find it very difficult to live in this atmosphere forevermore. If they could be honest with you, many would tell you they don't want their dead sibling closed up in his or her room, as though their dying was something for which they're being punished. Instead, bring the record player and records into the den, or use the backpack and tent or whatever, because it comforts them to feel that their sibling has once again become a part of the family and not relegated to "the room".

I don't think I know of anyone who hasn't kept some belongings of their dead child, so that must be normal. What we learn after the death is that life is tenuous at best, and rather than hanging on to unchanged rooms, try to value the important people who are left in this life, be they family or friends, and savor them along with the memories of your dead child. For when all is said and done, those memories are truly the important part of what you have left of your child. That's a truth that doesn't need changing.

Mary Cleckley, TCF Atlanta, GA

BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Dardozi - son - James Dardozi - 3/7
 Anne DeMaio - grandson - Domenico DeVito - 3/7
 Joe & Germaine DePiano - son - Luke - 3/27
 Joanne Devito - grandson - Domenico - 3/7
 Janie & Joseph Dougherty - son - Brendan K. Dougherty - 3/29
 Robert & Lee Duffield - son - Michael Robin - 3/31
 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
 Kate Gara - godchild - Colin - 3/27
 Jo Ann Gatlin - daughter - Lisa Diane Gatlin - 3/20
 Danielle & Joshua Graham - brother - Jake - 3/27
 Elizabeth Haney - son - Christian - 3/6
 Jack & Stacy Kabic - daughter - Brithy - 3/29
 Elida Kauffman - son - Daniel - 3/9
 Joan Kellett - grandson - Keith Mastronardo - 3/23
 Gloria and Jerry Koval - son - Steven - 3/11
 Terry Kozlowski - son - Frankie - 3/12
 Tracey-Anne Langley - Sister - Nataly - 3/25
 Julie Lauderback - son -Donovan Lauderback - 3/5
 Vivian & Kenneth Maahs - daughter - Kirsten - 3/22
 Tom & Charmaine Malik - son - Danny Malik - 3/3
 Shannon Mastronardo - son - Keith - 3/23
 Andrew Mautz - Son - Jaxon - 3/17
 Lee & Laurie Maxwell - son -Dan - 3/14
 Jeff and Kathy McCarron -daughter - Sarah - 3/30
 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
 Janet Patrizio - son - Stephen - 3/12
 Terri Pfeiffer - son - Matthew - 3/6
 Susan Reynolds - son - Craig Anderson - 3/24
 Lisa and John Russo - son - Casey - 3/17
 Susan & John Rutland - son - Justin Rutland - 3/28
 Sandy Salveter - son - Greg - 3/20
 Carol Sannella - son - David Sannella - 3/18
 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
 Joy Tower - son - Ken - 3/28
 Peggy Tweed - son - Matthew Bock - 3/18



BIRTHDAYS - con't

PeggyWest - daughter - Kelly Ann West - 3/8

Susan Yarnall - son - Jesse - 3/2

Carolyn & Tom Yuhas - son - Eric Whitelock - 3/4

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 accept 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.

Marie Hofmockel, TCF Valley Forge

A GRANDPARENT'S POINT OF VIEW

The death of a child is the most tragic thing that can happen to anyone. It affects so many lives - family, friends, and even strangers.

I lost my grandchild through death, and only a grandparent can understand the love a grandparent has for a grandchild and the loss that is felt when the child dies. For a grandparent, it is a double loss. Not only is your grandchild gone, but you also watch your child die each day. The smile that was always on her face is no longer there. The hurt is so deep and the questions so many. You feel helpless as a parent. You can't kiss the hurt away as you did when she was a child. You have no answers for her questions, for you don't understand the many feelings that you are experiencing yourself. Each day you hope and pray for a little ray of sunshine to show on her face. You search for a little something to say or do that will comfort her. It seems that there is no end to the suffering.

As time goes slowly by, the healing process begins. In time, a ray of hope will show on her face and a smile will make her eyes light up again. She will turn to you for what little comfort you can give to her. There will always be a part of you that is gone, but in time, you can learn to live with the part that is still here.

Ruth Eaton, TCF, Savannah, GA

BEATITUDES FOR THOSE WHO COMFORT

Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not always have a quick "comforting" answer.

Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved's closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.

Blessed are those who hear with their hearts and not with their minds.

Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.

Blessed are those who admit their uncomfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.

Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.

Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.

Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

Jacki Deems

WHO WILL LOVE YOU?

Who will love you when I'm gone,
Whisper your name when twilight comes,
Long to touch your hand, then shed a tear,
Or write a poem to you
As I have often done?

Who will love you when I'm gone
And keep you in his breast
And feel the gaping pain
That makes me weep
As I have often done?

Who will love you when I'm gone,
Sit in silence in your lonely room
And dream of times when I could
Watch you in your sleep as I have often done?

Who will love you when I'm gone
And stir up childhood memories
Of sandboxes, swings and trains?
I will, my son, for we will be **Together in eternity.**

David Ziv, TCF, Warrington, PA

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.

The Compassionate Friends Credo



*A bereavement organization
For parents, siblings and families
We offer friendship, love and understanding
We talk, we listen, we share, we care.*

Valley Forge Chapter
of the Compassionate Friends
Rhonda Gomez
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