

# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the **First Saturday** of every month, at 1:45 PM (ending at 3:30 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 Meetings -

March — 3/2/2024 @ 1:45 PM

April— 4/4/2024 @ 1:45 PM

May— 5/4/2024 @ 1:45 PM

June— 6/01/2024 @ 1:45 PM

July— 7/06/2024 @ 1:45 PM

August— 8/3/2024 @ 1:45 PM

September— No Meeting

October - 10/5/2024 @ 1:45 PM

November — 11/2/2024 @ 1:45 PM

December— 12/8/2024 @ 2 PM  
Remembrance service, 2 pm

The reason there is no meeting, the church has time reserved for other activities.



## March 2024

### Chapter Leader:

Rhonda Gomez  
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### Newsletter Publisher:

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### 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.

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

## Changes in this newsletter

The changes you see on the front page are due to the fact that we all are getting older and prefer not to drive at night. We consulted with the church staff to find out how we could come up with a day and time that is convenient for most of you. We will not be able to notify members about meeting cancellations due to bad weather if we not have their email addresses.

## 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.

## 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

Gini and Kent Patterson - In memory of our son, Scott Edward Patterson.

## RISK

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**

## 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

Thomas & Mary Jane Poore - Bradley Poore - son - 3/19  
 Eileen & Tom Algeo - Megan - daughter - 3/2  
 Jovanna and Joseph Bevilacqua - Donato "Danny" Bevilacqua - son - 3/27  
 Loretta Bovell - JoAnna - daughter - 3/7  
 Gary Chavez - JoAnn - wife - 3/31  
 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  
 Othello & William Heaney - Kevin - son - 3/10  
 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 - 3/10, Anastasia - granddaughter - 3/10  
 Florence and Martin Mack - Martin III - son - 3/21  
 Ella Mack - Elizabeth - sister - 3/23  
 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

# Anniversaries - Cont'd

Marcella Rice - Elise B. Rice - mother - 3/28  
 Kelly Rossi - Kevin - brother - 3/8  
 Becky Rotkowski - Brian - brother - 3/14  
 Beverly & Joe Rush - Kelsey - daughter - 3/29  
 Melissa Toland - Connor Shepherd - son - 3/17  
 Akhil & Judy Tripathi - Sunil - son - 3/17  
 Peggy Tweed - Matthew Bock - son - 3/16  
 Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver - Mark Cote - brother - 3/26  
 Laurie Wyche - Jameson Wyche - son - 3/1

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## 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.

## LOVE LIVES ON

Those we love  
 Are never really lost to us  
 We feel them  
 In so many special ways  
 Through friends  
 They always cared about  
 And dreams they left behind,  
 In beauty that they added to our  
 days ...  
 in words of wisdom  
 We still carry with us  
 And memories that never will be  
 gone...  
 Those we love  
 Are never really lost to us  
 For everywhere their special love  
 lives on.

## Rose Marie Cote, TCF Valley Forge, PA

In loving memory of my son, Mark on his anniversary 3/26

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Author,

Amanda Bradley

**COURAGE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEAR AND PAIN,  
 BUT THE AFFIRMATION OF LIFE DESPITE FEAR AND PAIN.**

**Rabbi Earl Grolmman**

# BIRTHDAYS

Catherine Dardozi - James Dardozi - son - 3/7  
 Anne DeMaio - Domenico DeVito - grandson - 3/7  
 Joe & Germaine DePiano - Luke - son - 3/27  
 Joanne Devito - Domenico - grandson - 3/7  
 Janie & Joseph Dougherty - Brendan K. Dougherty - son - 3/29  
 Robert & Lee Duffield - Michael Robin - son - 3/31  
 Richard & Martha Fenoglio - Judith Fenoglio Daw - daughter - 3/30  
 Sarah Fishel - Allyson - daughter - 3/26  
 Bill & Karen Flavin - Chad Flavin - son - 3/7  
 Lisa Foos - Curtis - son - 3/14  
 Kate Gara - Colin - godchild - 3/27  
 Jo Ann Gatlin - Lisa Diane Gatlin - daughter - 3/20  
 Danielle & Joshua Graham - Jake - brother - 3/27  
 Elizabeth Haney - Christian - son - 3/6  
 Jack & Stacy Kabic - Brithy - daughter - 3/29  
 Elida Kauffman - Daniel - son - 3/9  
 Joan Kellett - Keith Mastronardo - grandson - 3/23  
 Gloria and Jerry Koval - Steven - son - 3/11  
 Terry Kozlowski - Frankie - son - 3/12  
 Tracey Anne Langley - Nataly - Sister - 3/25  
 Julie Lauderback - Donovan Lauderback - son - 3/5  
 Vivian & Kenneth Maahs - Kirsten - daughter - 3/22  
 Tom & Charmaine Malik - Danny Malik - son - 3/3  
 Shannon Mastronardo - Keith - son - 3/23  
 Andrew Mautz - Jaxon - Son - 3/17  
 Lee & Laurie Maxwell - Dan - son - 3/14  
 Jeff and Kathy McCarron - Sarah - daughter - 3/30  
 Carol Meehan - Patrick W. Meehan - son - 3/11  
 Greg and Mary Miller - David - son - 3/26  
 Beth Mohr - Matthew Bock - brother - 3/18  
 John Mscisz - Liam John Williamson - grandson - 3/8  
 Aminah Na'im - Dawann - son - 3/3  
 Marie O'Connon - Curran J - son - 3/27  
 Janet Patrizio - Stephen - son - 3/12  
 Terri Pfeiffer - Matthew - son - 3/6  
 Susan Reynolds - Craig Anderson - son - 3/24  
 Lisa and John Russo - Casey - son - 3/17  
 Susan & John Rutland - Justin Rutland - son - 3/28  
 Sandy Salveter - Greg - son - 3/20  
 Carol Sannella - David Sannella - son - 3/18  
 Jeffrey Smith - Jacob Smith - son - 3/2  
 Mary Ellen Swider - Kelly Swider - daughter - 3/25  
 Allan Thomas - Vernon Odins - son - 3/5  
 Joy Tower - Ken - son - 3/28  
 Peggy Tweed - Matthew Bock - son - 3/18  
 Peggy West - Kelly Ann West - daughter - 3/8  
 Susan Yarnall - Jesse - son - 3/2  
 Carolyn & Tom Yuhas - Eric Whitelock - son - 3/4



## **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

## 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 included 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.

**Marie Hofmockel, TCF Valley Forge**

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"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**

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  
Chapter Leader  
12 Brook Circle  
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**The  
Compassionate  
Friends Inc.**

March 2024

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