



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

MAY 2016

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

May 5 General Sharing

June 2 General Sharing

July 10-12 TCF National Conference Scottsdale, AZ
See page 3

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

Luanne Steffler, grandson *Jordyn* (14)
Jack & Stacy Kabic, daughter *Britny* (19)
Stacy Ludy, daughter *Alyssa Kenny* (28)
and granddaughter *Anastasia* (21 months)

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

REFRESHMENTS

Ellen and James Burbano in memory of our son, *Eric* on his birthday 4/19.

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

Lee & Robert Duffield in loving memory our son, *Michael Robin*

Pete Mihalek in loving memory of my son, *Andy*

Fred & Irene Sutton in loving memory of our son, *Jim Sutton* on his anniversary 4/16.

LOVE GIFT DATE CORRECTION TO MARCH 2016 NEWSLETTER

Should have read:

Nina Berstein in loving memory of my son, *Andrew* on his anniversary 2/9

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

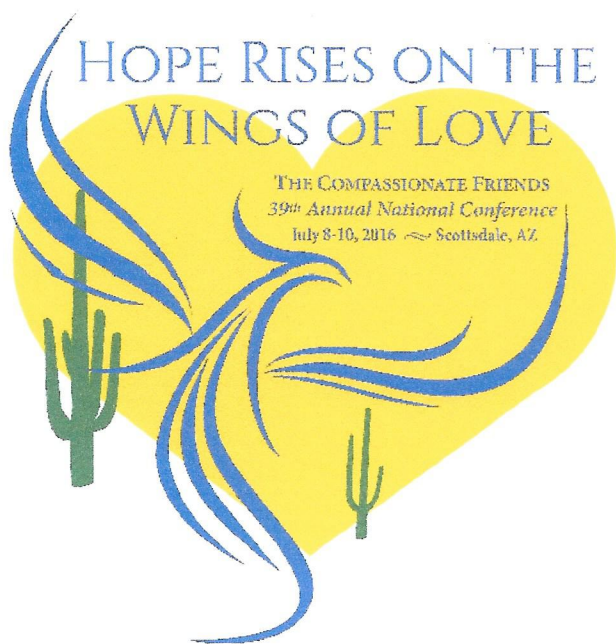
We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.

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 2016



The Compassionate Friends National Conferences offer much healing to bereaved parents.

Many well known speakers will be addressing the opening and closing sessions., luncheons, banquets, and many workshops on different aspects of grief.

National Conferences offer a Hospitality Room, Reflection Room, Butterfly Boutique, Book Store, and Memory Boards to place a picture of your loved ones, and a candle lighting service.

There will be time for one-on-one sharing with our TCF families.

TCF Facebook

Join 22,000 people who are sharing their grief journey at The Compassionate Friends Facebook page. The page is designed to be informative and supportive. Check out the question or quote of the day. You can find the page by going to TCF's website home page at www.compassionatefriends.org and clicking on the Facebook icon. Or you can go to Facebook and do a search for "The Compassionate Friends/USA." Join us and contribute to the conversation.

RESPONSE FEATURE ON VALLEY FORGE WEBSITE

The Valley Forge website (www.tcfvalleyforge.org) has a feature for you to leave comments and suggestions that you would like to see in the Chapter Program. Please voice your opinions on how the Chapter is being conducted, and ways we might improve the program. The chapter belongs to all of us, please support it.

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.**

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Marilynn Anton, nephew *Steven Schneibolk* 5/7
Donald Barber, son *Steven W. Barber* 5/19
Laura Bedrossian, son *Teddy* 5/9
Stephen & Barbara Billings, daughter *Laura Elizabeth Billings* 5/22
Shirley & Lex Bono, son *Greg* 5/19
Loreta & Ken Cericola, son *Anthony Cericola* 5/3
Mary & John Chelius, son *John J. Chelius, Jr.* 5/2
Joanne & Tom Christman, son *Kyle R. O'Neill* 5/23
Kathy Concannon, daughter *Tracey* 5/31
Joanne De Felice, son *Joseph* 5/27
Anton & Maureen DeMaioribus, daughter *Ann DeMaioribus* 5/17
Vanessa Diaz, friends child *Samir* 5/16
Danielle Evelyn, son *Samir* 5/16
Carol Graber, son *Bobby* 5/17
Judi Griffith, son *Steve* 5/27
Samuel & Mary Lou Hardman, son *Samuel J.* 5/19
Frank Harms, son *Tyler* 5/20
Robin Hayman, son *Bradley Hayman* 5/11
Debbie Helman, son *Adam* 5/7
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, grandson *Steven Schneibolk* 5/7
William & Marilyn Hudson, son *Robert Hudson* 5/11
Brad Ingerman, son *Justin* 5/18
Jean Jones, grandson *Bobby* 5/7
Donna Kendall, daughter *Jennifer* 5/7
Loretta Kline, son *Keith Edward Kline* 5/11
Susan Lipson, nephew *Justin Ingerman* 5/18
Maryellen & James Madden, daughter *Anne Marie Madden* 5/18
Anne McClenachan, brother *Andy McClenachan* 5/30
Michael & Maria McFadden, daughter *Rachel McFadden* 5/14
Susan McKelvey, son *John* 5/20
Mike & Jen Meluskey, daughter *Carolyn Meluskey* 5/13
Cheryl Mezzaroba, son *Lon Mezzaroba* 5/18
Leonard & Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* 5/14
Ann Murray, son *Jonathan Rapoport* 5/17
Christy O'brian, daughter *Evie* 5/2
Elsie Oreski, son *Gregory T. Oreski* 5/22

MAY BIRTHDAYS continued

Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son *Richard H. Owens, Jr.* 5/12
Sam & Palma Panichello, son *Joseph Panichello* 5/21
Holly Kuiatkouski and Paul Falkestein, daughter *Anna* 5/21
Lyla T. Poulson, brother *Joe* 5/18
Barbara Purtell-Frank, son *Michael John Keller Purtell* 5/28
Andrew Randolph, brother *James* 5/26
Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, father *Albert Volpe* 5/4
Kathleen Schmitt, son *Ken Schmitt* 5/31
Pamela Schneibolk, son *Steven* 5/7
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Scott Alan Rosenthal* 5/26
Ann Sherwood, son *David Foster Sherwood* 5/3
Priscilla Shober, son *Jeffrey R. Shober* 5/27
Melissa Smith, daughter *Ava* 5/18
Margaret & Matthew Strickler, son *Timothy Strickler* 5/4
Suzanne Teleha, son *Peter Teleha* 5/20
Hans & Margaret Van Naerssen, son *Eric* 5/21
Ann VanLandingham, daughter-in-law *Rita VanLandingham* 5/17
Lauretta Wagner, daughter *Traci Wagner* 5/23
Patricia White, daughter *Diane Patricia White* 5/1
Donna White, sister *Diane White* 5/1
Muriel Wilson, son *John F. Shaffer* 5/12
Joan & Ed Young, son *Jed Young* 5/18

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Madeleine Adler, son *J. Peter Adler* - 5/30
Donald Barber, son *Steven W. Barber* - 5/30
Rob and Janet Beiswenger, son *Jared* - 5/18
Gloria Bello, son *Joseph* - 5/21
Ben & Cathy Breskman, son *Brian* - 5/26
Martha & Albert Caesar, son *Daniel Mark Caesar* - 5/13
Joane Cooper, daughter *Katy* - 5/21
Rose Marie Cote, husband *Paul Cote* - 5/27
Jamie (Germaine) Cote Weaver, father *Paul* - 5/27
Franklin & Patricia Cox, daughter *Christen Fox*- 5/26
Jane Cox, son *Bill* - 5/24
Bud Cunnane, son *Patrick* - 5/2
Janie Ebersole, daughter *Ashley Sankus* - 5/16
Justine Ellinger, daughter *Keira Ellinger* - 5/7
Charlie & Jill Fick, son *Michael Sternberg* - 5/14
Colleen and Dan Fledderman, daughter *Amy* - 5/25
William & Marilyn Hudson, son *Robert Hudson* - 5/11

MAY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Joan Kingslake, son-in-law *Guy Thornton Woods* - 5/6/97
Loretta Kline, son *Keith Edward Kline* - 5/20
Pat Kuchler, son *Michael* - 5/3
Dan Logan, daughter *Joanie* - 5/28
John & Nancy Logue, daughter *Kaitlyn Logue* - 5/3
Tom & Charmaine Malik, son *Danny Malik* - 5/12
Michelle Mazzio, son *Brendan Mazzio* - 5/20
Robert McCullough, daughter *Caroline Patricia McCullough* - 5/27
Marian Melchiorre, grandson *John Anthony Peticca, Jr* - 5/11
Mike & Jen Meluskey, daughter *Carolyn Meluskey* - 5/22
Mary O'Halloran, brother *Thomas M. O'Halloran* - 5/28
Winnie & James O'Halloran, son *Thomas M. O'Halloran* - 5/28
Anna Packer, daughter *Anna M Packer* - 5/22
Holly Kuiatkouski and Paul Falkestein, daughter *Anna* - 5/26
Lyla T. Poulson, daughter *Kimberly Poulson* - 5/21
Sharyn & Joe Pozzuolo, son *Joey Brad Pozzuolo* - 5/19
Joe & Kim Pratt, son *Paul* - 5/16
Christine and Richard Purkiss, son *Adam Clark* - 5/7
Joan & Earl Reigel, daughter *Melissa Reigel* - 5/4
Lynn & Stephen Scartozzi, daughter *Christine Marie Scartozzi* - 5/28
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, friend *Christopher Harvey* - 5/6
Linda Sciarra, son *John Anthony Peticca Jr* - 5/11
Cathy Seehuetter, daughter *Nina Seehuetter* - 5/11
E. Pearl & Ernest Smith, son *Tony* - 5/5
Helen Smith, son *Bob Smith* - 5/15
Andy & Alexandra Smith, son *Charlie* - 5/30
Karl & Sue Snepp, son *Dave Snepp* - 5/31
Harry & Merrily Spiess, grandson *Charles Smith* - 5/29
Catherine & Gerry St. John, son *Greg* - 5/12
John & Rose Stanley, daughter *Susan Stanley* - 5/29
Pety Suy Matthew Kuchler, son *Ethan* - 5/3
Robert & Nancy Thompson, friend *J. Peter Adler* - 5/30
Marissa Wadsworth, son T.J. Wadsworth 5/28
Mek Wagner, daughter *Paige* - 5/13
Deb Walter, son *Evan* - 5/10
Terry & Susan Weikel, daughter *Jennifer* - 5/11

**We wish you a very meaningful Mother's Day.
May their love be what you remember most.**

SHARED THOUGHTS ON MOTHER'S DAY

Mother's Day is that special day that our children can make us feel what a good job we have done in rearing them. As they express love, feelings, and appreciation, we know we have given them the right ingredients for living. I still have a box of those beautiful homemade cards from construction paper, flowers, lace, over decorated and many saturated with perfume. I cherish them so. The simplicity, innocence, love, crooked and reversed letters in their message can still bring tears. How fortunate we are to have had children. Many never know the bliss a child can bring.

Many times our beautiful holidays become difficult. Instead of looking forward to them with excitement, and enjoying the anticipation of their coming, we dread and fear those special days. Frequently, our anticipation can cause more pain than the day itself, as we reminisce and say "remember when", it also brings to mind that there will be no more added memories of that person.

Losing our children or siblings, makes us realize the importance memories play in the role of getting through our grief. We cherish memories. They are far more valuable than all the tangible things we have from our children or siblings. In our early grief they are very bitter sweet, for even good memories are painful. But now that many years have passed, I find them very peaceful, and value them. We will always wish there were more, but we gather those we have, and hold them close.

Mother's day will be especially hard for those families who do not have surviving children. I would never attempt to say I know how they feel, because I'm sure I don't know the depth of their despair of not having living children. Our hearts go out to them for this additional pain they must bear. To those we extend our love and caring. For the more fortunate families, it is important to share Mother's Day with our surviving children, and not deny them the same happiness and joy we gave to our deceased child. We are so all consumed with grief, that it takes time before we can value what we have left. Our living children need to know they are as loved as the ones we have lost. We know this, but sometimes we forget to tell them how grateful we are to have them. It is very human to channel all our energy to the one that is not here. Our surviving children need to know they bring us much to live for.

Sometimes it is difficult to find joy in anything when newly bereaved. We, the more seasoned members of Compassionate Friends know this will change, we can feel joy again. It will be different, as our priorities have changed. This does not take place as soon as we would like, but it will come. Even though that is difficult to believe now, longer bereaved parents and siblings tell how grief does soften and feelings will return. Our living children need to be assured, we and they will change in time. We wish you peace and hope.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* , TCF Valley Forge, PA

Our sorrows and wounds
are healed only when
we touch them with compassion.

Author unknown

We are all mothers in our own right. Though the world
may see us as childless. In our hearts and souls and
lives, we ARE and always will be mothers.

Pittsburgh, PA TCF

MOTHER'S LOVE

Thinking of the child you love,
On a bright day in Spring,
As you look at the clouds all fluffy white
Brings a joy that your heart can sing.

All the magic gone away
Because the child isn't about,
Seeing the future through new eyes,
Brings a sadness, there is no doubt.

But the sharing you had in your child's dream,
And the thought of all his charms,
Makes you feel this young one,
Is once again held in your arms.

Thinking of the child you love,
Can make music fill the air.
The memory of a soft face so dear,
Spreads sunshine everywhere!

Thinking of the child you love,
You know your life is more worthwhile.
All the hours you spent in his care,
Reaches your lips in a wondrous smile.

And then you can stop and think,
Thank God and say a prayer,
That He sent you this child to love,
And put him in your care.

Thinking of the child you love,
With memories of things past,
Gives you joy and brings the tears
For a love you know will always last,
Beyond horizons and through the years.

Jean Stajcar - Central Iowa TCF
"For all mothers who have lost a child."

MOTHER'S DAY

Our day... a very special day. A day that is set aside especially to honor all Mothers.

Mother... a beautiful word. What other word could you use to best describe giving birth to, nursing, loving and caring for a tiny helpless human being? A gift of life to treasure. But weren't we taught that once you give a gift to someone, you should never take it back? What went wrong? Mine was taken away from me. Does that mean that I wasn't worthy to be a Mother, that I was failing, that I didn't appreciate the gift? The gift was too precious to be given for keeps. It was only loaned to me for a short while. Even in my sorrow, I feel special, for I know the true meaning of the word Mother. I have reached the ultimate, from the joy of birth to the sorrow of death. I belong to a special group who truly know the meaning of the word Mother.

Would I have not accepted the gift if I had known the terrible loss I would feel by having it taken away from me?...No... I would still hold out my hands and accept such a precious gift, for to love and to cherish, even for a short while, is worth every tear.

This is Mother's Day, I'll shed my tears but let them be as soft summer rain...a rain that nourishes the earth, tears that heal and cleanse my heart.

Vera Babb
TCF / St. Louis, MO

WE MISS YOU SO

Your smile
 Your laughter
 Your way of lifting our spirits
 Your sunny glow
 Oh, how we miss you so

Your affection
 Your sweet nature
 Your way of listening
 Your charm
 Oh, how we miss you so

We long for your touch
 To see your beautiful face
 To talk and reminisce
 We would love that so much

You left this world
 With such an impact on us
 We can't talk about you
 Without making a fuss

So, we'll think of you
 In all our days to come
 Look forward to being with you
 Probably brood and cry some

We'll also smile and laugh
 In memories of you
 That's what you did for us
 What lucky people we were to have you!

So, watch over us
 Enjoy your peace and know
 We'll be together someday
 But, oh how we miss you so!

Lisa Lebowitz
 TCF Orange Park/Jax.

BELIEVE

In the rising of the sun
 and in its going down,
 We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind
 and in the chill of winter,
 We remember them.

In the opening of the buds
 and in the warmth of summer,
 We remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves
 and the beauty of autumn.
 We remember them.

In the beginning of the year
 and when it ends,
 We remember them.

When we are weary
 and in need of strength,
 We remember them.

When we are lost
 and sick at heart,
 We remember them.

When we have joys
 we yearn to share,
 We remember them.

So long as we live,
 they too shall live,
 for they are now a part of us
 We remember them.

from *GATES of PRAYER*
 Reform Judaism Prayer book

WOULD THEY COME BACK ?

We miss them so, but would they come back?

When I see the beauty of the birds soaring ecstatically in the sky, somehow claiming the beauty as their own; I watch them carefully, sometimes they are playfully cutting into the wind to forge in their direction of choice.

I think of our loved ones up in heaven, and I feel they are as happy as the birds soaring and dipping and floating with wings spread wide.

There too, however, they have important work to do: Greeting the new loved ones into the kingdom of heaven and acting as God's angels to watch.

I sense that they wouldn't come back if given a choice. It would be like a caged bird who had had his wings clipped to protect him from flying outside into an uncaring world: Walking on the floor in stoic resignation.

Bea Kroon - TCF, Bradenton, FL

A RETARDED CHILD

Having a retarded child has its rewards as well as it heartaches. I wish I could put my feelings into words, so the whole world would know what a joy Brian was to us. He was a very handsome boy with blonde hair and large blue eyes and a very deep dimple, and his smile was like a ray of sunshine. He was very special to us (my husband, myself and our other son and daughter who just idolized him). He could not express verbally his feelings for us, but the way he grabbed and embraced us with such sincere affection for every little thing we did for him (no matter how small) was worth a thousand words. He taught us the true meaning of the word love. We visit his grave quite often, and no matter what kind of a day it is, it seems as though the sun peeks through for just a minute, a reflection of Brian's smile to let us know how grateful he is that we are there.

Since it was God's will for me to have a retarded child, the greatest thing I can say about it is that, I thank-God-he-chose-me-to-be-Brian's-mother.-I-feel-almost-as-privileged-as-Mary-must-have-felt-to-be-chosen-as-the-mother-of-God. In our minds and hearts, Brian will never die.

Anita O'Connell - TCF, Delmar/Albany, NY

HOW TO HELP ME GRIEVE

Be there for me:

I feel alone, in pain.

I need a friend.

Share my sorrow:

Speak from your heart.

I have to talk about my feelings.

Let me grieve:

Listen to me, I need to cry.

We all grieve in our own way
and in a different time frame.

Keep the memory alive:

It is always on my mind.

I have so many memories.

I need your help:

Help me, call me, pray for me.

Do whatever you can.

Don't desert me:

Don't desert me after the 1st or 2nd week.

I need you especially on holidays.

Take care of yourself:

I need to depend on you.

Help me to heal:

Involve me, listen to me months later.

I need your interest and invitations.

Be my friend:

Don't be afraid of me or my grief.

It's okay to cry.

Lastly, please don't criticize until you've
walked in my shoes.

Instead: Pray for me.

Vivian Sagert

TCF, Minitonas, Manitoba, Canada

Waterbugs and Dragonflies

Down below the surface of a quiet pond lived a little colony of water bugs. They were a happy colony, living far away from the sun. For many months they were very busy, scurrying over the soft mud on the bottom of the pond. They did notice that every once in a while one of their colony seemed to lose interest in going about with its friends. Clinging to the stem of a lily, it gradually moved out of sight and was seen no more.

'Look!' said one of the water bugs to another, 'One of our colony is climbing up the lily stalk. Where do you suppose she is going?' Up, up, up it went slowly. Even as they watched, the water bug disappeared from sight. Its friends waited and waited but it didn't return. 'That's funny!' said one water bug to another. 'Wasn't she happy here?' asked a second water bug. 'Were do you suppose she went?' wondered a third. No one had an answer. They were greatly puzzled.

Finally one of the water bugs, the leader of the colony, gathered its friends together. 'I have an idea. The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk must promise to come back and tell us where she went and why.' 'We promise', they said solemnly.

One spring day, not long after, the very water bug who had suggested the plan found himself climbing up the lily stalk. Up, up, up he went. Before he knew what was happening, he had broken through the surface of the water, and had fallen onto the broad, green lily pad above.

When he awoke, he looked about with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. A startling change had come to his old body. His movement revealed four silver wings and a long tail. Even as he struggled, he felt an impulse to move his wings. The warmth of the sun soon dried the moisture from the new body. He moved his wings again and suddenly found himself up above the water. He had become a dragonfly.

Swooping and dipping in great curves, he flew through the air. He felt exhilarated in the new atmosphere. By and by, the new dragonfly lighted happily on a lily pad to rest. Then it was that he chanced to look below to the bottom of the pond. Why, he was right above his old friends, the water bugs!. There they were, scurrying about, just as he had been doing some time before. Then the dragonfly remembered his promise: 'The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk will come back and tell where he or she went and why'.

Without thinking, the dragonfly darted down. Suddenly he hit the surface of the water and bounced away. Now that he was a dragonfly he could no longer go into the water. 'I can't return!' he said in dismay. 'At least I tried, but I can't keep my promise. Even if I could go back, not one of the water bugs would know me in my new body. I guess I'll just have to wait until they become dragonflies too. Then they'll understand what happened to me, and where I went'.

And the dragonfly winged off happily into its wonderful new world of sun and air.

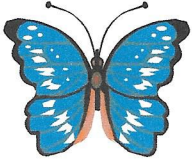


**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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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