



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

## MAY 2017

### 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 Founders 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 4 General Sharing
- June 1 General Sharing
- July 28-30 40th TCF National Conference  
"Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope"  
Orlando, Florida.  
Conference Registration (see page 3 & 4)  
Conference Hotel Reservation (see page 2)
- Sept 16 Butterfly Release (see page 2)

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**

#### Chapter Leaders

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#### Love Gift Acknowledgements

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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**

**Carol Dawidziuk**, daughter *Rachel* (50), and son *Michael* (25)

**David White**, son *Randy* (37)

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 sometimes takes several meetings to feel the full benefit of group sharing.

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**REFRESHMENTS**

**James & Ellen Burbano** in honor of our son *Eric's* 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.

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**LOVE GIFTS**

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

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

**BUTTERFLY RELEASE**

The Valley Forge Chapter will have a butterfly release on Saturday, September 16, 2017 at 3 PM at the Gazebo behind the Upper Merion Township building, which is caddy corner to the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. The cost of the butterflies will be determine in the near future and ordering information will be published in the June TCF-VF newsletter.

**PLEASE SAVE THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDARS**

**TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE HOTEL REGISTRATION**

Conference Hotel Registration should be made directly to the Hotel.

Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek  
14100 Bonnet Creek Resort Lane  
Orlando, Florida 32821  
Phone: 1-407-597-3600

At this point the only rooms available in the TCF reserved block for the conference are two queens or king size beds. The Discounted Compassionate Friends price is \$145 plus 12% tax for either of these choices. You must make them aware that you are a TCF Attendee to get the reduced price.



40<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM  
 PO Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL • 60522-3696  
 877.969.0010 • 630.990.0246 fax

Online registration available at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Please return this form complete, along with your check (*made payable to TCF*) or credit card information for the full amount to the above address.

### CONFERENCE REGISTRANTS

Person 1 Name _____	Circle code(s) as appropriate BP CS TS AS G R F WP PR RC CL RC SC	First time at a TCF Conference? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Person 2 Name _____	BP CS TS AS G R F WP PR RC CL RC SC	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Person 3 Name _____	BP CS TS AS G R F WP PR RC CL RC SC	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Person 4 Name _____	BP CS TS AS G R F WP PR RC CL RC SC	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

BP-Bereaved Parent, CS-Child Sibling (9-12), TS-Teen Sibling (13-17), AS-Adult Sibling (18+), G-Grandparent, R-Relative, F-Friend, WP-Workshop Presenter, PR-Professional, RC-Regional Coordinator, CL-Chapter Leader, NE-Newsletter Editor, SC-Steering Committee

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please provide a separate registration form for registrants not residing at the same address. Make additional copies of this form.)*

Please fill in below the name(s) of your deceased child(ren), sibling(s), or grandchild(ren), birth and death dates, and cause of death.

Child's Full Name (Also note the first name you want on nametag, if different)	Date of Birth (Mo/Day/Yr)	Date of Death (Mo/Day/Yr)	Cause of Death
_____	____/____/____	____/____/____	_____
_____	____/____/____	____/____/____	_____
_____	____/____/____	____/____/____	_____
_____	____/____/____	____/____/____	_____

*(If more space is needed, please attach a separate page.)*

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

Adult Registration (ages 18+) \$95.00 each x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Child Registration (ages 9-17) \$45.00 each x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Full-Time College Student/Active Military (student ID/Military ID required at check-in) \$45.00 each x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**A. Total Registration Fees \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

### CONFERENCE MEALS

Friday Afternoon Lunch \_\_\_\_\_ Totals Meals x \$39.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Saturday Evening Dinner \_\_\_\_\_ Totals Meals x \$59.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**B. Total Conference Meals \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Persons wishing to eat at the Conference meals must be registered for the Conference. Sorry, no exceptions. As reservations for meals are made in advance, no meals may be purchased on-site.

SIBLINGS

Sibling Attendee \_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt Size YS YM YL S M L XL 2XL 3XL 4XL

Sibling Attendee \_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt Size YS YM YL S M L XL 2XL 3XL 4XL

Friday Sibling Event: Denim and Diamonds \_\_\_\_\_ Total Attending x \$30.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

C. Total Special Sibling Event \$ \_\_\_\_\_

WALK TO REMEMBER

Walk to Remember \_\_\_\_\_ Total Attending x \$25.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Each Participant MUST sign the waiver.

In consideration of being accepted as a participant in the The Compassionate Friends Inc., Walk to Remember (WTR), I hereby affirm, acknowledge, and agree to the following: (1) That I assume all responsibility for any and all damages to, or theft of, my personal property or any bodily injury (including death) that may occur to me, and further, I assume responsibility for property damage and bodily injury (including death) that I may cause to others, in each case arising or resulting from, incidental to, or as a consequence of, my participation in the WTR; (2) That I, for myself, my heirs, my executors and administrators, release and hold harmless from and waive all claims, damages, and rights of action, present or future, whether the same be known or unknown, anticipated or unanticipated, foreseen or unforeseen, arising or resulting from, incident to or as a consequence of, my participation in the WTR, which I may now or hereafter have against The Compassionate Friends, Inc., any business or companies along the route and any and all sponsors and volunteers for said event, and the respective directors, employees, and agents of all of the foregoing; (3) That I grant the permission for use of my name and/or picture in any broadcast, photograph, video, or other account of the WTR; and (4) That I am aware of the physical demands and hazards of participating in a two-mile walking event such as the WTR.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Shirt Size (circle one): YS YM YL S M L XL 2XL 3XL 4XL

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent or guardian if under 18)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Shirt Size (circle one): YS YM YL S M L XL 2XL 3XL 4XL

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent or guardian if under 18)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Shirt Size (circle one): YS YM YL S M L XL 2XL 3XL 4XL

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent or guardian if under 18)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Shirt Size (circle one): YS YM YL S M L XL 2XL 3XL 4XL

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Parent or guardian if under 18)

D. Total Walk to Remember \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

A. Total Registration Fees \$ \_\_\_\_\_

B. Total Conference Meals \$ \_\_\_\_\_

C. Total Special Sibling Event \$ \_\_\_\_\_

D. Total Walk to Remember \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL DUE \$ \_\_\_\_\_

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Check  Visa  MasterCard  Discover  American Express

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Registration ends July 7, 2017. After that date, attendees must register on-site. There will be no refunds after July 7, 2017. Hotel reservations must be made directly with the hotel.

**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  
**Don & Monica 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  
**Krishna Byrd**, son *William* 5/29  
**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  
**Jane Cox**, son *Bill* 2/21/1967 - 5/24  
**Joanne De Felice**, son *Joseph* 5/27  
**Anton & Maureen DeMaioribus**, daughter *Ann DeMaioribus* 5/17  
**Vanessa Diaz**, friends son *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  
**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  
**Thelma Miller**, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* 5/14

**MAY BIRTHDAYS continued**

Christy O'brian, daughter *Evie* 5/2  
Elsie Oreski, son *Gregory T. Oreski* 5/22  
Betty & Richard Owens, Sr., son *Richard H. Owens, Jr.* 5/12  
Sam & Palma Panichello, son *Joseph Panichello* 5/21  
Holly Kuiatkouski & Paul Falkestein, daughter *Anna* 5/21  
Barbara Purtell-Frank, son *Michael John Keller Purtell* 5/28  
Andrew Randolph, brother *James* 5/26  
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, father (Bubbles) *Albert Volpe* 5/4  
Carl Rudegear, son *Adam* 5/7  
Sheila Scanlon, grandson *Andrew McGuire* 5/12  
Kathleen Schmitt, son *Ken Schmitt* 5/31  
Pamela Schneibolk, son *Steven* 5/7  
Enjoli Segneri, boyfriend *Shane* 5/16  
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  
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**

Don & Monica 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  
Krisha Byrd, son *William* - 5/29  
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 & Dan Fledderman, daughter *Amy* - 5/25

**MAY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED**

**Daniel Gentry**, daughter *Emily* - 5/4  
**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  
**Kimberly Newman**, mother *Margaret Haffey* - 5/14  
**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 & Paul Falkestein**, daughter *Anna* - 5/26  
**Sharyn & Joe Pozzuolo**, son *Joey Brad Pozzuolo* - 5/19  
**Joe & Kim Pratt**, son *Paul* - 5/16  
**Rusty & Anthony Puglisi**, husband *Tony Puglisi* - 5/23  
**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  
**Kathleen Schmitt**, son *Ken Schmitt* - 5/21  
**Anthony & Marsha Schrader**, daughter *Krista* - 5/11  
**Linda Sciarra**, son *John Anthony Peticca Jr.* - 5/11  
**Cathy Seehuetter**, daughter *Nina Seehuetter* - 5/11  
**Melissa Smith**, daughter *Ava* 5/18/2011 - 2/5/2012  
**E. Pearl & Ernest Smith**, son *Tony* - 5/5  
**Helen Smith**, son *Bob Smith* - 5/15  
**Karl 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

**SHARED THOUGHTS ON "MOTHER'S GUILT"**

The month of May has always been an ego booster for most of us mothers, as we receive cards of praise and flattery from our children. But now that our child has died, and we are walking around with a hole in our soul, those same greeting cards can cause us guilt by not feeling worthy of the words.

We most always refine our priorities, and make new standards for ourselves after the death of our children. One of those priorities is don't put off spending time together or expressing our love. With our hindsight of knowing the child's life was cut short, we critique our motherhood as though we could have been super-human. We measure our mothering performance as though we could have given 100% of our time to our precious child. We punish ourselves with guilt, by remembering specifics of harsh words or deeds. Most often these are very normal human things most parents do and say. We know we cannot change, or take back, any infliction we place upon our child.

When we were entrusted with the gift of our children, we were not given hindsight, or the ability to be perfect. We were expected to handle all the other responsibilities placed upon us by other family members, and many mothers dealt with jobs to provide financial support for the family. This means there was not time, nor energy, to be the perfect parent. We were even expected to make mistakes, but now guilt holds us responsible for all our parental shortcomings. I have learned if we did what we thought was right at the time, or the best we could, that was all we could do. It is unfair to measure our performance as a parent with hindsight or super-human powers that we did not possess.

I'm sure our children did not judge us nearly so harshly as we judge ourselves. You may find it very helpful to tell your deceased child how you feel, what you wish you could have done, and how much you love them. I, personally, feel they are in an all-knowing state, and can better understand our expression of love. I'm sure a lot of our guilt would subside, if our children could express their image of us as parents.

Love is the greatest gift we have ever given or received. Just the fact we hurt so badly, and our pain is so intense, tells us we had great love for our children.

The pain of losing our children can never stop totally, but we can help to ease it to the point we can live with it. We would be very angry if someone would judge us as unfairly as we judge ourselves. We must first learn to love ourselves again, so we can love others. We love our children, even with their flaws. We must respect our children enough to know they love us, even when we are not the perfect parent. Don't minimize their love by thinking they were not capable of forgiving, or understanding that we did our best, and that was good enough.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge



**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

### THE MYTH OF PERFECT PARENTHOOD

The feeling of worthlessness is strong in many bereaved parents. I believe that the Myth of Perfect Parenthood that is deeply set in us is one of the main causes. We expect that we will raise perfect children, provide them with the very best we can afford, and most of all, see that they are safe and secure in their lives. Then, when the unspeakable happens and our child dies, we feel we have failed totally and completely.

We did not see the unhappiness in our child in time to prevent his suicide.

We did not spot the symptoms of her illness in time to prevent her death.

We let her take the car instead of driving ourselves.

We were enjoying ourselves somewhere else when he was rundown by a careless driver.

It's our fault. We failed to be perfect parents. It sounds ridiculous, but unconsciously, below our awareness, lies the idea that if we had been doing our job as "Good Parents," we could have prevented our child's death.

We ourselves expect to do a better job of rearing our children than our parents did. All around us, other parents seem to be doing a better job with their children than we are. We are bombarded from all sides by the idea that we should be perfect parents. Even before our child died, many of us felt inadequate as parents at times, but when our child died, we saw ourselves as total failures. Our unconscious minds told us we were not "Perfect Parents," so therefore our child was dead. We failed. We were worthless.

How unfortunate this is. As human beings we cannot be perfect parents. WE NEED TO REALIZE THAT WE DID THE BEST WE COULD HAVE DONE FOR OUR CHILD WITH THE EMOTIONAL, INTELLECTUAL AND MATERIAL TOOLS WE HAD. Our child's death, no matter what he died from, was NOT caused by our failure as parents.

We need to be aware that this Myth of Perfect Parenthood is actively at work in our subconscious minds and feed our feeling of worthlessness. THE PAIN OF THE LOSS OF OUR CHILD IS DEVASTATING ENOUGH -- WE DON'T need to beat ourselves down even further by allowing this myth to consume us.

*Margaret Gerner* St. Louis, MO TCF

### STILL LIVING

Just when I think this old life  
isn't worth living,  
I am touched by the big brown eyes  
of the one still living.

Just when I think my heart is breaking,  
That same heart leaps for joy  
with the one still living.

Just when I'm down and out,  
Suddenly I'm lifted up by  
the one still living.

Just when the load seems too heavy,  
The burden, is lifted by a smile from  
the one still living.

Just when sadness and despair seem  
the only emotions left,  
Happiness and laughter are brought out by  
the one still living.

Just when I need it most, I get a hug from  
the one still living.

*Anita Detamore*, TCF, Knoxville, TN

It is the end of February, which means we are nearing the end of what has often been a brutal winter. While gazing at the mountains of snow piled high in my front yard and the foot long icicles hanging from my roof, it is hard to imagine that spring will ever come. We have endured bitter cold winds that have chilled us to the bone and treacherous roads that we have cautiously traveled. The days have been long and dark and often free of sunlight. No matter how long you have been a native of the Upper Midwest, I know we all will be glad when it comes to an end.

However, as I described these thoughts about winter, I felt as if I was describing the days of my early grief. At that point, I did not believe that a day would ever come when I would thaw from the chill that had overtaken my body and mind. The bleakness of my existence during those early months after Niina died is almost frightening to remember; it is so difficult to even conceive of that much pain. I was anesthetized from some of its cruelty by the protective blanket of numbness that blessedly shielded me from the gale force of such overpowering sorrow. How could I ever feel spring in my heart again?

Spring had always been my favorite season. The air had a certain freshness to it that I would drink in. Simply put, it always made me feel happy and light of heart. Spring was our reward for surviving the freezing winter months that preceded it. It brought a smile to my face and a bounce to my step.

However, it was the spring of the year where my heart was irretrievably broken. It was during this exquisite season of warm, lilac-scented breezes and sun-kissed mornings where my sweet daughter Nina's life would end.

I wondered if my thoughts about spring would never be the same. Rather than anticipate with gladness the coming of spring, I dreaded it with the knowledge that it contained the anniversary of her death. The smell of the air and the look to the sky that I once found exhilarating now brought me back to my darkest day. I know that anyone, who has lost a loved one to death, no matter the season, understands.

Will spring come again to your life? In the almost six years since Nina died, has it come to mine? Looking back at my description of the winter of "my early grief", I know that I have come a long way from that time of desolation. I have found, especially after the first two years, that with each subsequent spring, I have rediscovered some of the pleasure I used to feel. I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again; it doesn't mean I am dishonoring my daughter's memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart. I try to retrieve memories of the dandelion bouquets she so carefully gathered and presented to me, the rides to the park in the Radio Flyer, our talks while sunning on the deck, and, of course, shopping for spring clothes! Her favorite pastime! I will always feel tenseness, apprehension and sadness as May 11th draws near, but I no longer hold it against spring.

It is a slow, difficult journey, this grief pathway we travel. It is as treacherous as the roads we maneuvered following the winter storms, never knowing when we will hit an icy patch on the road and be thrown into a tailspin. Yet, we must travel it if we are to find any measure of peace and healing.

Please be patient with yourself as you are working hard to survive this winter in your heart. Trust that spring, though a much different one than the one we knew before our beloved child died, will come again. With gentle thoughts,



**Cathy L. Seehuetter**

TCF St. Paul, MN

In memory of my daughter, *Nina*



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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### **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.

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