

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

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

MARCH 2007

Inside Valley Forge

All 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 at Valley Forge and Henderson Roads, King of Prussia, PA. Phone on meeting evenings only is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Ann or Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule

Please Mark Your Calendar

Mar 1 - General Sharing

Apr 4 - PLEASE NOTE WEDNESDAY
(see page 3)

Sept 28-30 - E. PA Regional Conference

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 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.** Donations are also accepted at meetings. We are most grateful for your support.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: RECORD KEEPER, FRANK GOMEZ
PLEASE SEND ALL OTHER CHAPTER MAIL
TO CHAPTER CO-LEADERS
ANN RAPOPORT or RHONDA GOMEZ**



Valley Forge Chapter

Chapter Co-Leader

Ann Rapoport
14 Lakewood Drive
Media, PA 19063
email: libbyann47@yahoo.com
(484)919-0820 cellphone

Chapter Co-Leader

Rhonda Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343
(484)919-0820 cell phone
email: sugar@hybridpoplars.com

Record Keeper

Frank Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343
email: fgomez@hybridpoplars.com

Webmaster

Frank Gomez
www.tcfvalleyforge.org

Newsletter Editors

Marie & Ken Hofmockel
340 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(610)337-1907
email: kenhofmockel@comcast.net

E.PA Regional Coordinators

Marie & Ken Hofmockel
(see info above)

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free: (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org
email: national.office@
compassionatefriends.org

NEW FRIENDS

George & Barbara McClory

Lisa Bledy, sister *Danielle Bledy* 6/2/93 - 12/4/06

Elizabeth Haney, son *Christian* 3/6/86 - 11/28/06

Stephanie Grier, son *John "JD" Grier* 4/15/94 - 8/17/06

Debbie Repas, daughter *Stacy*

Betsy Townsend, daughter *Wendy Townsend Besche* 10/25/63 - 7/29/05

Bruce & Barb Campbell, son *Greg* 5/30/84 - 8/21/06

Tim & Laura Romie Broh, pregnancy loss 1/8/06

Peggy Tweed, son *Matthew Bock* 3/18/83 - 3/16/06

John & Donna Halligan

We welcome our newly bereaved friends. We are sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all been in the depths of despair and know that it is difficult to share our pain and personal feelings. We hope that you will attend three or four meetings before evaluating the benefit of our group to you. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love, compassion and understanding to all of you.

JANUARY & FEBRUARY REFRESHMENTS

Barbara & Bruce Campbell in memory of their son, *Greg* 5/30/84 - 8/21/06

Marilyn Toole in memory of her son *Ted Toole* 11/3/66 - 2/26/03

Anyone wishing to donate refreshments (cheese & crackers, fruit, cakes, cookies, etc.) in memory of loved ones, please call **Ann Rapoport or Rhonda Gomez(484)919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment **chart** located on the refreshment table. Beverages are provided by the chapter.

LOVE GIFTS

WE THANK YOU

We, the Valley Forge Chapter, wish to express our thanks and gratitude to Mary Jane Poore for her dedication while serving as co-leader of the Valley Forge Chapter (with Ann Rapoport) since March of 2005. Mary Jane is resigning her position as co-leader, effective March 1, 2007.

She has contributed much in nurturing the chapter, by giving of her time and love, it takes both physical and emotional support to be a chapter leader. Although she was the visible co-leader, much of the work was shared by Tom Poore. His support is also greatly appreciated.

A large portion of the responsibility of being a chapter leader, is the day to day, behind the scenes work of reaching out to bereaved families.

Mary Jane & Tom joined the Valley Forge Chapter in April 1994. Mary Jane had been a facilitator many years prior to becoming a co-leader. She has given support to many bereaved families coping with their grief.

We hope this commitment has been a rewarding experience and has brought healing in their lives, as they memorialize and honor the life of their son, Bradley Poore (4/25/74 - 3/19/94).

Mary Jane & Tom will continue to be supportive of the Valley Forge Chapter.

WE WELCOME YOU

The Valley Forge Chapter, wishes to welcome Rhonda Gomez as a new co-leader. She will be serving in this position with Ann Rapoport.

Rhonda has been serving on the chapter steering committee, and very faithfully attending sharing sessions. She has contributed much in these areas, and has shown leadership ability.

She and her husband, Frank, joined the Valley Forge Chapter shortly after they lost their son, Frank, Jr. (9/30/72 - 7/17/03). Frank became the chapter record keeper and webmaster in March 2005. We are appreciative of both Rhonda and Frank's tremendous contribution to our chapter.

CHANGE OF APRIL MEETING NIGHT

We will meet **Wednesday** evening April 4, 2007 due to Maundy Thursday religious holiday.

The parking lot will be filled with church members attending the service on Thursday.

This change applies to the April meeting only.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

The newsletter will be available by email to those who wish to receive it in this form. You will receive the newsletter earlier if you opt to receive the newsletter by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, and later decide you want to receive it by postal service, 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 Valley Forge Chapter is registered with **Genuardi's** to receive a rebate on purchases made by anyone who registers their Genuardi's card, and designates The Compassionate Friends Valley Forge Chapter to receive the rebate. You must register our **Escrip ID# 149361427** at the customer's service, which can be done at any time. This must be renewed annually each September. Unlike the rebate from Acme, you do not need to save receipts. **PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM.** This financial support can help us reach many bereaved families.

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:

SHARED THOUGHTS ON ANGER

Anger is probably one of the worst stages of grief. It is a raw emotion, we do not choose to be angry. It won't go away by denying it. It can be very mild, or a rage that will almost destroy us. Our anger intensifies when we feel something, or someone, should have prevented the death, or done more for our loved one. We almost feel it is our duty to lash out at what, or who, let us down. Many times our anger isn't about how they died, it's just the fact they died.

Because the situation we are in seems so senseless, and we feel so helpless, we search for a reason for our tragedy. We want to understand why it happened, but seldom are there answers.

We often feel anger when those around us won't allow us to be human, and expect us to bottle up our feelings, and pretend they don't exist, so they don't have to deal with our pain. They justify being angry at a broken appliance, or disabled car, but can't allow us to be angry when such a large part of our future has been taken from our lives. We can't verbally express it, because it is not socially acceptable, and it sometimes results in an explosion toward those around us. This causes anger to be misdirected. This is when it becomes very destructive. It is most important to seek the right place and people to vent our feelings. We need to seek someone who is concerned, sympathetic, and will not pass judgment, but will gently make suggestions, and direct our anger into a positive direction. (this sounds as though we need a Compassionate Friend).

It is very healthy to be angry if we express it, and don't get stuck there. Many question their supreme being, and the role they played. I feel this is a form of communicating, which can be necessary for some to obtain peace. We all take different roads to reach healing.

We have to face the pain in all areas of grief that we deal with. I needed to spend time with me. After much healing I asked myself what new traits or knowledge have I acquired that could possibly help me, and make a better world for other bereaved parents. The one thing that I needed most was to "stay around" to say, "Grieve in your own way, because how you grieve is probably best for you". The pain did soften, and eventually I was glad there was a tomorrow. I did not believe that this was possible in my early stages of grief, you probably won't believe it either, but I have to tell you anyway.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* , TCF Valley Forge

REMINDER

Did you wake up in the morning
with tears in your heart?
And did you say to yourself
"I should not feel like crying
not like this, every morning."

But you do know the truth, don't you?
When life deals us such a tragic blow,
such enormous damage,
We need many mornings to recover.
We need more than a few moments to heal.

Take for yourself the grace
of one quiet healing-step at a time.
Trying to rush the work of grief,
will slow down your renewal.

You only need to remember
that you will recover some day.
You only need to remember
that we all have our own pace,
and we all move in our own measure.

Healing takes time. *Sascha Wagner*

IN THE RIVER OF TEARS

I see reflections of man and boy
Who's life gave pride and joy
Yet this day my heart fills with tears
You have been gone for eight long years.

The River of Tears washed away disbelief
This River claims the memories I keep.
The River of Tears will be no more
When arms enfold you at Heaven's shore.

In memory of my son *Mark Cote* 6/3/63-3/26/99
Rose Cote
Valley Forge Chapter

TO ONE IN SORROW

Let me come in where you are weeping friend,
And let me take your hand.
I, who have known a sorrow such as yours,
Can understand.
Let me come in - I would be very still
Beside you in your grief.
I would not bid you cease your weeping friend,
Tears bring relief.
Let me come in - I would only breathe a prayer,
And hold your hand,
For I have known a sorrow such as yours,
And understand.

Grace Noll Crowell

A PRAYER FOR SPRING

Like Springtime, let me unfold
and grow fresh and anew,
from this cocoon of grief
that has been spun around me.

Help me face the harsh reality of
sunshine and renewed life,
as my bones still creak from
the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me.
And as I recover from the insult
of life's continuance,
I readjust my focus to
include recovery and growth
as a possibility in my future.

Give me strength to break out of
the cocoon of my grief.
But may I never forget it is
the place where I grew my wings,
becoming a new person
because of my loss.

Janis Heil

REMEMBERING

Go ahead and mention my child,
The one that died, you know.
Don't worry about hurting me further,
The depth of my pain doesn't show.

Don't worry about making me cry,
I'm already crying inside.
Help me to heal by releasing,
The tears that I try to hide.

I'm hurt when you keep silent,
Pretending it doesn't exist.
I'd rather you'd mention my child,
Knowing that he has been missed.

You asked me how I'm doing,
I say "pretty good" or "fine".
But healing is something on-going,
I feel it will take a lifetime.

Elizabeth Dent, TCF McMinnville, OR

STARTING OVER AGAIN

As parents, how many times have we told our children to try, try again? “You can do it, just start over,” we’d say, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, learning to tie shoes, school assignments, or later the other difficulties that life brings.

Little did we think that this well meaning advice we gave out of love and concern for our children’s well being would be the words that we now must follow. Hang on. Don’t give up. Try again and start over. All this now applies to us. Had the situation been reversed we could not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue on, not in constant sorrow, but with hope for renewal and better days ahead. As we have said to them, they would be throwing right back to us, it is a very hard road that you must travel, but you can do it. What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to, to find your way out of the dark tunnel and when you fall, pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it. What we wanted for our children is not less than they would want for us. If we could hear them right now, they would be saying “LIVE, for life is but a moment”, “LOVE, for that is what really matters”, and go on for we shall be together again some day.

Mary Ann Lambden, TCF Gloucester County, NJ

I KNOW YOU ARE LISTENING TO ME WHEN:

- *You come quietly into my private world and let me be.
- * You really try to understand me even when I am not making sense.
- * You grasp my point even when it is against your sincere convictions.
- * You realize that the hour I took from you has left you a bit tired and drained.
- * You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you think they may be wrong.
- * You do not take my problem from me but allow me to deal with it in my own way.
- * You hold back from giving me a word of “good advice”.
- * You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it.
- * You give me enough room to discover for myself what is really going on.
- * You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how it makes you feel good by being helpful.

Glen Crawford, TCF, Perth, West Australia

THE END OF SUMMER

The branches dance as the gentle wind
rustles through the leaves.

I listen for your name
I do not hear it.

The fluffy clouds float across the sky
creating ever-changing pictures as they move.

I look for your name in the colors
I do not see it.

The birds chirp and sing
as they fly to the feeders
I listen for the melody that echoes your voice,
It is not there.

I sit quietly observant in this sylvan place
I hear you, I see you, I feel you
here in my heart.

Carol Silverman
TCF - Abington, PA Chapter

SIBLING CORNER

I'M SORRY FOR THE THINGS I DIDN'T DO

It's too late to say "I'm sorry"
for the things I didn't do.
It's too late to say, "Forgive me,
and I'll make it up to you"
For you're gone now, forever.
Oh, if you only knew,
"Kid Brother," just how much
I miss you.

No more teasing, no more pleasing,
No more borrowing the car,
No more promising to be careful,
No more sneaking in the pickle jar.
God in Heaven, please take care
Of that brother of mine.
He was so sweet, so tender, and kind.

Oh, Dear God, when you see him
Please tell him for me
That I miss him something awful,
Though I have my memories.
And, Dear God, there is something
That I'm asking of you -
Ask Jimmie to please forgive me
For the things I didn't do.

-- *Laura Mae Martin*
TCF, Grand Junction, CO

Please don't ask me to keep in step..
It's hard enough just to stay in line!
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO

I NEVER KNEW MY BROTHER

I never knew my brother, yet I know him well.
Through my mother's eyes I've known him,
And I love him still.
I'll grow tall and strong like him
And yet not like him at all.
He'll be my guardian angel.

And we'll grow through life as one.
I have his clothes and toys and photo.
I hold them dear to me,
But most of all I treasure loving memories --
The memories my mother gave to me.
Karen Hoyland, TCF, Brisbane, Australia

GRIEF IS OK

Grief is normal., grief is O.K.
Grief is the way your body has to say that you
love the son, daughter, brother, sister,
even a friend that died;
But sometimes it makes you cry.
Steven Horn, Age 10 - TCF/Hinsdale, IL

Memory is a form of immortality.
Those you remember never die.
They continue to walk and talk with you.
Their influence is with you always.

Wilfred A. Peterson
TCF, Toms River, NJ

STEPS TO MAKING PROGRESS

ALLOW YOURSELF

To be imperfect.
Whatever brings you pleasure and a little peace.
To remember your child in whatever way
you feel appropriate.

FORCE YOURSELF

To keep communication open.
To accept offers of help from family & friends.
To go through the old routines again.
To really listen to your spouse and children.
To try an activity you used to enjoy.

CONVINCE YOURSELF

That every member of the family will and
should grieve differently.
That you won't feel dead inside forever.
That your confusion about intimacy with your
spouse is normal.

LET YOURSELF

Off the hook for problems.
Feel the anger.
Feel whatever it is that you do feel about God.
Treasure your special friends.

TEACH YOURSELF

To establish small goals.
Everything you can learn about grief.
To ignore well-intentioned, unhelpful comments
of others.
To let go of the moment of your child's death.
To embrace the memories of your child.

TALK TO YOURSELF

To change the negative ways you think.
About everything.

FORGIVE YOURSELF

For not being the most perfect parent.
For all the things you did or did not do.

FIND YOURSELF

Now that you have changed into a different
person.
Without relying on drugs, alcohol, etc.
Rely on positive techniques (reading,
writing, new hobby, etc.)

INDULGE YOURSELF

By being selfish, doing something just for
you.
Because you deserve it.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

By talking out your feelings.
In a safe atmosphere,
such as The Compassionate Friends.
Through a new activity.

FORGET YOURSELF

AND GIVE OF YOURSELF

By seeking out other bereaved parents and
others in trouble.
By concentrating on others who are in pain.
To discover that

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE
As a tribute to your child.

Joe and Elizabeth Rousseau

BURN OUT QUIZZ