

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

OCTOBER 2012

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 Please Mark Your Calendar

Oct 4 General Sharing

Nov 1 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Jan 3, 2013 Sibling Sharing (see page 4)

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**



Valley Forge Chapter

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NEW MEMBERS

Suzanne Teleha son, *Peter* (20)
John Horulko son, *Daniel* (32)
Karen LaPerna son, *Michael* (29)

SEPTEMBER REFRESHMENTS

Rhonda & Frank Gomez in loving memory of our son, *Frankie* on his birthday Sept 20

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

Nina Bernstein in loving memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* on his birthday Oct. 12.

Gary Chavez in loving memory of my son,
Christopher on his anniversary August 4.

Rose Cote & Jamie Weaver in loving memory of our son-brother,
Mark J. Cote

Catherine Dardozzi in loving memory of my son,
James on the 10th anniversary of his death.

Marcia & Harold Epstein in loving memory of our grandson,
Andrew Voluck on his birthday October 12.

Denise & Edward Frazier in loving memory of our son, *Akhir* (16).

Marie & Ken Hofmockel in loving memory of our grandson,
Steven Schneibolk on the fifth anniversary of his death.

Jerry & Gloria Koval in loving memory of our son,
Steven Koval on the anniversary of his death September 3.

Brian & Gina and Ruth & John Richardson in loving memory of our son-grandson,
Nicholas on his birthday September 1

Roxborough Manayunk Lioness Club in memory of *Denis Kearns*

Barbara Purtell-Frank in loving memory of my son, my angel,
Michael John Keller-Purtell on his birthday October 29.
Forever in my heart, missed you so very much.

Marie Schmeltzer in loving memory of my son,
Samuel on his birthday September 11

Elizabeth & Henry Weaver in loving memory of our son,
Donald E. Smith, Sr. and grandson,
Donald E. Smith, Jr. on his anniversary October 16.

Rose Yanni in loving memory of my nephew, *David Yanni* on his birthday Oct. 26.
You are still in our hearts for the joy and love you brought to us.

**We wish a very meaningful holiday
to our friends who will be observing Yom Kippur.**



Chapter Leaders



Butterfly Release
Upper Merion Township Park
September 15, 2012



SIBLING SHARING SESSIONS - BEGINS JANUARY 4, 2013

We are enthused about having an Adult Sibling group in our chapter again.

The facilitator for the siblings will be Stephanie Bailey (the daughter of our ever faithful librarian, Carole Bailey).

This group will be open for ages of those in high school and older. The meetings will be held on the same evening as the parents, but in a separate room. All conversations will be confidential.

We need your participation to make this opportunity beneficial. You may send the form below, email, phone, or just come without announcing your interest.

Please send information to Rhonda Gomez, 12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343, phone 484-919-0820, or email: sugar@tcfvalleyforge.org.

I am interested in attending meetings.

_____ name

_____ age

_____ address

_____ phone

_____ email address

DEATH IS NOTHING AT ALL

Death is nothing at all.
I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I, and you are you,
Whatever we were to each other,
that we are still.
Call me by the old familiar name.
Speak of me in the easy way
which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes
that we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the
household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without an effort,
without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as it ever was.
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.
What is this death but a negligible accident?
Why should I be out of mind
because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,
somewhere very near, just round the corner.
All is well.
Nothing is past; nothing is lost
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting
when we meet again!
Canon Henry Scott Holland
Submitted by Phyllis Adler
In loving memory of my son, *Matthew*

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.**

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Maryellen & Dick Abell, son **Brian Abell** 10/14
Carole Bailey, son **Matthew J. Bailey** 10/6
Victoria Bayle, son **Bobby D Bayle III** 10/5
Nina Bernstein, son **Andrew Voluck** 10/12
Martha & Albert Caesar, son **Daniel Mark Caesar** 10/18
Diana Clark, grandson **Alexander** 10/16
Carole and Kevin Creighton, son **Ryan Kent Creighton** 10/7
Virginia Di Fronzo, daughter **Sis** 10/7
Harold & Marcia Epstein, grandson **Andrew Voluck** 10/12
Gwen & Walt Gearhart, grandson **Jamie Rogers** 10/29
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, daughter **Patricia Gibbons** 10/26
Virginia Hagen, son **Matthew D. Hagen** 10/20
Joanne Haley, son **Douglas Haley** 10/4
Carl & Catherine Helwig, son **Michael Helwig** 10/9
Jean Jones, grandson **Bobby** 5/7
Lynn Kivlen, son **Brien Kivlen** 10/12
Barb & Larry Lauchle, son **Gray** 10/23
Maryann Lockyer, son **Keith** 10/23
Maureen Lok, daughter **Jessica** 10/24
Jennifer & Michael Magee, sister **Jacqueline Ann Rogers** 10/3
Dan Markle, brother **Matt Markle** 10/30
James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son **Scott Mattiford** 10/15
Mark & Kathryn McNally, daughter **Beth Ann McNally** 10/1
Alexandra Milas, mom's sister **Demitra Vallianos** 10/16
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter **Barilyn Mountjoy** 10/3
daughter **Maralin Mountjoy** 10/3
Kathy Nicholson, son **Frank** 10/26
Peggy O'Brien, son **Rick O'Brien** 10/4
John O'Rourke, son **Brian J. O'Rourke** 10/27
Deborah Osting, son **Christopher Daniel Osting** 10/24
Roy Redman, daughter **Linda Inez Redman** 10/22
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, son **Thomas Reinert, Jr.** 10/21
Ginger & Merle Renner, daughter **Deanna Dawn Renner** 10/11
Carol Robinson, son **Jim Kearney** 10/4
Skipp & Kathy Robinson, daughter **Carrie Robinson** 10/28
Mike & Diane Rogers, daughter **Jacqueline Ann Rogers** 10/3

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS continued

Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* 10/29
Joy Conard Settles, son *R. Gary Korn* 10/5
Robert & Nell Shoemaker, daughter *Brynn Shoemaker* 10/5
Janis Siravo, son *Christian* 10/7
Betsy Townsend, daughter *Wendy Townsend Besche* 10/25
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* 10/4
Lucia Watters, daughter *Luanne* 10/14
Sandra & Harry Wolfheimer, daughter *Ann Marie Wolfheimer* 10/10
Rose Yanni, nephew *David Yanni* 10/26

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Marilynn Anton, nephew *Steven Schneibolk* - 10/02
Herb and Fran Barnett, son *Andrew* - 10/16
Victoria Bayle, son *Bobby D. Bayle III* - 10/2
William & Charlotte Bodulich, son *William W. Bodulich* - 10/15
Gina Cappelli, son *Dan Foley* - 10/9
Tom & Marge Del Rosario, son *Dominic* - 10/17
Virginia Di Fronzo, daughter *Sis* - 10/4
Joseph & Patsy Dooley, son *Peter J. Dooley* - 10/1
Shirley & Herb Druker, daughter *Heidi* - 10/25
Jim and Patty Duffy, son *Michael Duffy* - 10/28
Bonnie Gardner, daughter *Michelle* - 10/19
Thomas & Anne Glenn, daughter *Lauren Glenn* - 10/15
Charlotte and Michael Gormish, brother *Douglas Moyer* - 10/19
Carol Graber, son *Bobby* - 10/28
Herb & Karen Grant, son *Shaun* - 10/21
Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* - 10/18
Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. "Buddy" Hoesch* - 10/7
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, grandson *Steven Schneibolk* - 10/2
Joan Hornsby, daughter *Jackie* - 10/5
Jean Jones, grandson *Bobby* - 10/28
Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son *Edward Kiefski, Jr.* - 10/25
Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy, daughter *Barilyn Mountjoy* - 10/3
daughter *Maralin Mountjoy* - 10/3
John B. & Lillian Neff, son *Patrick Neff* - 10/17
Gary & Patricia Otto, son *Benjamin Otto* - 10/17
Joan Palumbo, son *Michael* - 10/13
Barbara Pearl, son *Jason Seth Pearl* - 10/16
Betty Jane Peters – Neilson son *Martin A Peters* - 10/22
Ruth Pluck, niece *Jackie* - 10/5

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES continued

Robert & Barbara Pontician, son *Rob Pontician* - 10/28
Ann Gill Price, son *Douglas Gill* - 10/5
Barbara Purtell-Frank, son *Michael John Keller Purtell* - 10/29
Marge Randolph, son *Doug Fixter* - 10/12
Ginger & Merle Renner, daughter *Deanna Dawn Renner* - 10/22
Robert & Nancy Ricciardi, daughter *Jessica Lee Ricciardi* - 10/7
Ilene & Sy Rockower, daughter *Amy Rockower* - 10/17
Thelma Rosen, brother *David Beeler* - 10/31
Barbara Rossman, daughter *Kickole Lyn* - 10/12
Ron & Sandy Ruth, son *Brian David Ruth* - 10/21
Carol Sannella, husband *Robert J. Sannella* - 10/21
Joan Santillo, daughter *Cathy Gambone* - 10/8
Pamela Schneibolk, son *Steven* - 10/2
Phyllis Sisenwine, daughter *Jill* - 10/9
Susan Snyder, son *Brian* - 10/22
Ruth Thomas, son *David George Thomas* - 10/28
Barbara Torrens, brother *Robert Birmele* - 10/21
Weldon & Marie Tyson, daughter *Lisa M. Tyson* - 10/26
Henry & Elizabeth Weaver, grandson *Donald Smith* - 10/16
Jackie Wesley, daughter *Teresa Ellen Wesley Hough* - 10/2
Theresa Wigand, daughter *Dawn* - 10/18
Paul & Marcia Woodruff, son *Danny Woodruff* - 10/29

NOT GUILT, REGRET

One of our basic responsibilities as parents is to keep our children from harm. So, when anything happens to them, we feel guilty whether we could realistically have done anything or not. When the ultimate tragedy occurs, we are devastated. How could we let it happen? Why didn't we stop it? If we have compounded our guilt with any degree of human error of commission or omission, we are beyond devastation. Even words, either of anger or left unspoken, haunt us.

Guilt implies intent. If we intended to harm our child, we can feel guilty of that. If we never intended harm to ever, ever come to our child, the correct name for our emotion is regret. The crushing pain is still there, but regret is softer, gentler, less judgmental, and easier to forgive and to heal. It is also more accurate. If that name doesn't feel strong enough for our feelings, it will in time. Let it float there and try it now and then. Not guilt - we feel regret.

Kitty Sanders, Nashville, TN
Survivors of Suicide Group

SHARED THOUGHTS ON HEALING, BUT NEVER FORGETTING

We lost our son Douglas 30 years ago. I did not run away from anything. I met it all head-on, but all the while, feeling the intensity of the pain would last a lifetime. **I did my grief work**, I shared my grief with most anyone who wanted to listen (probably with some who did not want to listen). After a while, I noticed I did not have the need to speak of my grief, and could find healing in listening and trying to comfort other's pain. This played a big role in my becoming functional again. For the most part, my life is productive, and filled with anticipation of looking for a tomorrow.

The one thing I cannot get past is feeling the pain for the newly bereaved. Because I have "been there" their pain becomes my pain. Several years ago our steering committee decided it would be beneficial for those attending a Compassionate Friends meeting for the first time, to meet separately. Ken & I were the Chapter Leaders, and having previously talked to most of these people by phone gave me some insight on their background, therefore I seemed the logical one to facilitate this group.

This was a very good experience for me. It reiterated that we heal, but we don't forget. Perhaps, the remembering is what gives us compassion and the desire to reach out to those hurting so badly. Much of the devastation of our loss is the same for all of us, the deep depression, anger, guilt, no interest in life around us, "going over the edge", worry about losing another, crying, can't cry, marital deterioration, unable to fulfill obligations with our family and work situations. I so want to make them better **now**, teach them to love again (particularly themselves), restore their faith in their supreme being, help them sort grief from true marital problems, and tell them we have all felt like we were going over the edge, **but didn't**.

It seems so little to offer, "your feelings are normal, you will get better, and become functional again". If the newly bereaved could **truly believe** these words, then I guess that is a **lot** to offer. But I feel most of them are thinking "you don't know how deep I have fallen in the pit" and this transition could never happen to me. (This was my reaction in the early stages) Believe me, we know where the bottom is, we've been there. We can learn to smile again; we can even learn to live again, once we have let go of some of the pain. Be patient, this doesn't happen soon. If it has not been long enough for you to see progress, look at those at The Compassionate Friends meetings, who have moved ahead in their grief. They didn't love any less, they have not forgotten how intense your pain can be, and they are just in a different place in their grief. Many have stayed to help you through your loss; their very presence says its possible to survive. **They are healing, but never forgetting.**

I still need to spend quiet time with my beloved son Douglas and grandson Steven, but the intense sharp pain has softened, and does not control very being.

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

I LOST MY BROTHER

I lost my brother, oh haven't you heard?
 I lost my brother, I must spread the word!
 If I say it enough, it may be alright
 I'll stop crying long enough to see beauty in the daylight.

How he laughed at my poems, too mushy and trite
 Yet somehow, I know, he would think this one's just right.

I I keep it inside and don't tell anyone else
 It won't really be true, I tell myself.

But the more I say it and talk about him
 The more I feel his presence growing stronger within.

It just wasn't fair to be taken so fast
 One more insult! One more smile!
 I would try to hold onto it for a very long while
 One more look! One more word!
 No it wouldn't last.

Things have to end, that's the cycle of life
 No! not him first, I pleaded every night.

What reason has God?
 To ruin our lives?
 What compassionate King
 Could do such a thing?

Perhaps we'll not know, it's not possible here and now
 There is nothing to get - no reason - no sound.

I'm changed forever, One foot in this world
 Till my time is out - half of me is in the clouds
 With him I try - I try to feel his soul
 I try to look for him, see him, hear his deep voice.

Then suddenly I realize, I don't have to try hard
 When I least expect it, he comes to me in my mind
 My memory is awakened and I bear a big grin
 He is closer than ever, watching me from within!

Francine Safir, TCF Valley Forge

In memory of my brother,
Howard Richard Safir 2/8/69 7/29/06

A SISTER'S LOVE

First, there's the fear,
 followed by disbelief.
 Then there's the tears,
 followed by the grief.
 Could it really be true
 that they say she may die?
 The pain is so deep seated
 why her, Father, why?

Time can never change the hurt,
 and the tears, they never dry.
 Things can never be the same,
 A child should never die.
 She did though, on a summer day,
 one I won't forget.
 I loved that girl, oh, so much,
 now memories are all that's left.

Is it fair to live on without you, girl?
 I think that's what you'd like,
 The house has an empty feeling,
 your room is dark, day and night.
 I won't forget you, don't you fear,
 you'll always have a place in my
 heart.

My love for you lives on.

Looking back through
 the book of my life,
 YOU are in my favorite part!

Helene Ann Marie Naselli
 TCF - Rockville Centre, NY

In your gathering of memories,
 Invite your courage to remember
 everything.

Sascha Wagner

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

Every time that I am in a group of bereaved parents, I hear people say things like, "I wish my child hadn't died" or "I wish I had him back." That wish, unfortunately, can never come true.

The other wish I hear is, "I wish my friends (or church, or neighbors, or relatives) understood what I am going through and were more supportive." This is a wish that has some possibility of coming true if we are able to be honest and assertive with the people around us. What do we wish others understood about the loss of our child? Here is a partial list of such wishes:

1. I wish you would not be afraid to speak my child's name. My child lived and was important and I need to hear his name.
2. If I cry or get emotional if we talk about my child. I wish you knew that it isn't because you have hurt me; the fact that my child died has caused my tears. You have allowed me to cry and I thank you. Crying and emotional outbursts are healing.
3. I wish you wouldn't "kill" my child again by removing from your home his pictures, artwork, or other remembrances.
4. I will have emotional highs and lows, ups and downs. I wish you wouldn't think that if I have a good day my grief is all over, or that if I have a bad day I need psychiatric counseling.
5. I wish you knew that the death of a child is different from other losses and must be viewed separately. It is the ultimate tragedy and I wish you wouldn't compare it to your loss of a parent, a spouse, or a pet.
6. Being a bereaved parent is not contagious, so I wish you wouldn't shy away from me.
7. I wish you knew that all of the "crazy" grief reactions I am having are in fact very normal. Depression, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and the questioning of values and beliefs are to be expected following the death of a child.
8. I wish you wouldn't expect my grief to be over in six months. The first few years are going to be exceedingly traumatic for us. As with alcoholics, I will never be "cured" or a "former bereaved parent", but will forevermore be a "recovering bereaved parent".
9. I wish you understood the physical reactions to grief. I may gain weight or lose weight, sleep all the time or not at all, develop a host of illnesses and be accident prone, all of which may be related to my grief.
10. Our child's birthday, the anniversary of his death, and holidays are terrible times for us. I wish you could tell us that you are thinking about our child on these days, and if we get quiet and withdrawn, just know that we are thinking about our child and don't try to coerce us into being cheerful.
11. It is normal and good that most of us reexamine our faith, values, and beliefs after losing a child. We will question things we have been taught all our lives and hopefully come to some new understanding with our God. I wish that you would let me tangle with my religion without making me feel guilty.
12. I wish you wouldn't offer me drinks or drugs. These are just temporary crutches and the only way I can get through this grief is to experience it. I have to hurt before I can heal.
13. I wish you understood that grief changes people. I am not the same person I was the moment before my child died and I never will be that person again. If you keep waiting for me to "get back to my old self", you will stay frustrated. I am a new creature with new thoughts, dreams, aspirations, values and beliefs. Please try to get to know the new me -- maybe you'll like me still.

Instead of sitting around and waiting for our wishes to come true, we have an obligation to teach people some of the things we have learned about our grief. We can teach these lessons with great kindness, believing that people have good intentions and want to do what is right, but just don't know what to do with us.

Do you remember how Pavlov, the famous psychologist, rewarded his dogs for doing the right thing? Their behavior repeated! If a neighbor sends a plate of cookies on the day of your child's birth, tell her how much you appreciated her remembering your child. If a relative jots a note in a Christmas card and says he is thinking about you during this difficult time, write back and thank him for acknowledging your pain. If by accident a friend mentions your child's name and it makes you cry, you may not be able to thank them at the time, but you can tell them later how important it is to talk about your child. Whether one of your wishes is fulfilled by accident or through great sensitivity, reward others for what they have done for you. Chances are good that they will repeat these kindness' on other occasions and perhaps your wish of having more understanding friend and relative will come true.

Elaine Grier, Philip's Mom, Atlanta Chapter

A DEATH BY SUICIDE

A death by suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced, by struggling to see that the suicide was not so much a deliberate, hostile act, but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that the person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope can temper, considerably, the emotional impact of a death by suicide.

One of the best responses to a suicide that I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by the pastor, of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence, his pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words:

“Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage, and only God knows how this child of His suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul. *Author Unknown*

THE MASK

I feel as if I am buried alive
Yet I smile and respond with "fine, thank you".
I have been appropriately conditioned, like fine leather
That no one wants to hear the painful truth.

An essential part of me, a limb
A constituent of my earthly being
Has been violently amputated.
Yet I laugh at the mediocre conversations
A verbal splash in a shallow puddle
Pretending to be a player of the words
That have no meaning.

My heart has been ripped from my bosom
No benevolence granted
No explanation – No apologies
Only cataclysmic pain
Only agony
No anesthesia remains, just the bitter pain.
Yet I wear the mask
Day to Day.

Pretending I fit in
But really I'm a foreigner to this new land
An alien language they speak.
And as I attempt to translate the words
Still, they mean nothing to me.

Sequestered in the mask
They hear not the music I dance to
Nor the words I speak
Nor the pain I echo
Nor the native language of my eyes
They will never really know me,
Hiding behind the mask.

Joanne Cacciature
From the book "Dear Cheyenne"

TO THOSE WHO REALLY HURT

KNOW . . . that your grieving is the most difficult thing you will ever have to do.

UNDERSTAND . . . that part of grief is bad days and bad nights. And intense pain and terrible sadness.

You must ACCEPT this as part of your healing.

But, KNOW ALSO . . . that there are gifts in your grief. They are not easy to find. And you will earn them with your tears. As you think about it . . . deep within your heart you KNOW that this is true.

THIS is why you can endure it.

Slowly . . . you will find new patterns. You will force yourself to take first steps. You will accomplish little victories. (None of us will tell you it was easy.)

GRIEVE WELL, my friend.

For grief well-grieved is truly life well-lived.
And once accomplished, you will discover untold new dimensions in your life . . .

BECAUSE a child died.

Shirley Melin
TCF, Aurora, IL