

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

OCTOBER 2013

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.



Valley Forge Chapter

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Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

- Oct 3** General Sharing & SIBLINGS
- Nov 7** General Sharing & Death by Suicide
- Dec 8** World Wide Candle Lighting (see page 6)
Collection of gifts for First Step (see page 2)

- 2015** Eastern PA Regional Conference being planned. More information to follow.

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**

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.

NEW MEMBERS

Joanne Morasco son, **Robert** (32)
Akhil & Judy Tripathi son, **Sunil** (22)
Sangeeta Tripathi brother, **Sunil** (22)

REFRESHMENTS

Refreshments may be donated in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda (484) 919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table.

Joanne DeFelice for all the children, grandchildren, and siblings.
Rhonda & Frank Gomez in memory of our son, **Frankie's** birthday

LOVE GIFTS

Nina Bernstein, in loving memory of my son, **Andrew's** birthday Oct. 12th.

And for Marie Hofmockel's speedy recovery.

Catherine Dardozzi, in loving memory of my son,
James on his birthday Sept. 7th.

Roxborough Manayunk Lioness Club, in loving memory of
Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.

Susan Lawlor, for the newsletter.

Shirley and Philip C. Kennedy & Sean Kennedy, in loving memory of our son &
brother, **Philip V. Kennedy's** 25th birthday.

Deborah Walter, (United Way donation) in loving memory of my son, **Evan** (20).

Rose Yanni, in loving memory of my wonderful nephew, **David Yanni** on his 50th
birthday on Oct. 26th. David is still in our hearts. I still remember the joy and
love he brought to us even after all these years.

GIFTS FOR UNDER PRIVILEGED CHILDREN

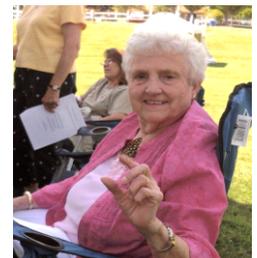
FIRST STEP is a program of Chester County for under privileged/handicapped children. For many years our Chapter has collected gifts for them. We will do so again this year, at our December 5th meeting & December 8th World Wide Candle Lighting Service (Children's Memorial Day) Program. The children are between the ages of 2 and 6. Both clothing and toys are welcome gifts. It is very rewarding to remember your child, by showing love to these children. Please wrap your gift with a tag that states suggested age and sex. You may sign it, "from your friend", or your child or sibling's name. This may be the only gift the child will receive. We appreciate your participation in this worthy cause.



Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Chapter Leaders



Butterfly Release
Upper Merion Township Park
September 7, 2013



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
Stephanie Bailey, brother *Matthew* 10/6
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
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
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
Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* 10/29

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS continued

JoAnne Sands, son *Tyler* 10/16
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
Frank & Dolores Yanni, son *David Yanni* 10/26

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Marilynn Anton, cousin *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
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
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
JoAnne Sands, son *Tyler* - 10/16
Carol Sannella, husband *Robert J. Sannella* - 10/21
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
Tina Ulshafer, son *Jimmy* - 10/30
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



COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

SPEAKER: Dr. Yvonne Kaye

Dr. Yvonne Kaye is an international speaker with a wide range of subjects, including post traumatic stress disorder and bereavement, specializing in the death of children. She is a certified Thanatologist, veteran radio talk show host, author, and Interfaith Minister, believing in the power of the human spirit. She is a strong advocate of humor and spirituality, a Spiritual Coach

and her philosophy is "Laughter is the miracle healer". Dr. Kaye received the prestigious Matty Muir Award 2005 for work with victims of crime. She has given much support for many years to TCF. Dr. Kaye has often been a Keynote speaker at Regional, National and International TCF Conferences.

The Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends will hold a candle lighting remembrance service on December 8th at 2 PM at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in the Fellowship Hall. (same place as our monthly sharing secessions are held). We also urge you to light a candle in your home at 7PM. We chose 2 PM for our local service so that it would be available to everyone, including those who do not drive at night. We hope you will take this opportunity to join us in remembering our children & siblings who have died, but will never be forgotten. Let us ensure that their light may always shine.

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GUILT

Frequently we invent our own guilt, by blaming ourselves because we did not have hind sight, and dwell on the "ifs and onlys". Parents assume responsibility for children's behavior, welfare, and fate, often forgetting that we are human and not all-knowing.

Sometimes we become our own worst enemy, especially when assuming the responsibility for our child's or sibling's death. It is important to understand the cause of the death, and not assume guilt that is not ours.

Often, we feel guilty for being alive, when our child or sibling has died. The event is so out of the natural order, that it is difficult to re-program our mind, to accept the fact that we have to live the rest of our lives without their being with us. It is hard to let go of the hopes and dreams for the future of that child or sibling.

In our early grief, it is easy to feel guilty for crying, laughing, socializing, or not socializing. Our behavior does not feel comfortable, or appropriate. We do not fully enjoy anything, because we can not attain our greatest desire (to be with our child or sibling).

Often guilt comes when we can no longer meet our responsibilities as homemaker, provider, mother, father, wife, husband, or sibling. All this adds to our low self-esteem, and makes us feel a failure. Our self worth is lowered when we feel dysfunctional.

Our grief will sometimes cause us to place guilt where it is not justified. It is important to not lay guilt on other family members, and guard against being accusatory, particularly for the child's death.

It is very normal to go through these stages of grief, which can rip us apart, and cause us deep pain. Through our grief work, particularly by sharing our feelings with a compassionate person who is not judgmental, the wound will heal, and help us to know and understand we did not cause, or could not have prevented the loss of our loved one.

Being so critical of ourselves, frequently inflicts much of our own pain. It is easier to forgive all others, than to forgive ourselves for not being super-human with impossible insight. It helps to be kind to yourself. We need all the love we can get to carry us through. Having done the best we can, is all that can be expected of us.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* - TCF Valley Forge Chapter

AUTUMN TEARS

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school, and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of, and to children. Halloween will soon approach and for some painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to loom ahead. These special days are forever reminders of our loss...the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have...the announcement of our long awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died...Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate.

Penny Young TCF Powel River, B.C

EXPECTATIONS

Expectations play a large role in our grief. Certainly, expecting to feel better and to not always hurt is helpful, (although we tend to expect it to happen too soon) but other expectations can be hurtful. Some of these are the expectations we have of those around us - our friends and relatives.

We “expect” them to listen to us talk about our child and our pain. We “expect” them to be sensitive and aware that we are hurting more on a particular day or date. We “expect” that they will understand that it is normal to grieve for so long. We “expect” them to understand our mood swings. We “expect” and we “expect”, and when they don’t understand or provide what we need we are angry and hurt.

TO EXPECT IS TO PRESUME. When we expect a friend or relative to behave a certain way or say a particular thing, we presume they know what we want or need. **This is rarely possible.** Even if the other person is a bereaved parent, he cannot read our minds. What they needed in their grief may not be what you need in yours. If our friend or relative is not a bereaved parent, it is even less likely they will have any idea how to help us.

The problem with expecting understanding and help from another, is that we set ourselves up to be hurt. On page 452 of one of my favorite books, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, it says, “my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations.” Of course, serenity doesn’t exist for the bereaved parent, but the hurt we feel from others IS “inversely proportional to our expectations.”

If we expect a friend or relative to do or say the right thing and they don’t, we are hurt. But, on the other hand, if we do not expect their reaction and they react as we would like them to, we will be pleased. I think it would be better to be pleased now and then, rather than be hurt almost every time.

We need to remind ourselves over and over, that **others do not know how to help us.** They are not being cruel, uncaring or indifferent. **They simply do not know what to say or do.** Therefore, the responsibility to let them know of our needs lies with us. Not only must we tell them of our needs, after we have done that we must take it a step farther. In the future, if the individual does not react in the way we prefer, we must try to accept this and consider that, for reasons only they can know, they are either unable or unwilling to do as we ask. We can’t know their innermost motivation anymore than they can know our innermost needs.

To eliminate the hurt we feel from others **we must let go of our expectations of them.** We can only be hurt if we **ALLOW** ourselves to be hurt by something that was done or said (or not done or said) in ignorance. **Remember, we ourselves did not know of bereaved parents needs** before our child died. There will be times we must simply say, “He or she doesn’t know,” or we might ask ourselves, “How important is it that that person is not supportive?”

It is up to us to protect ourselves from any more hurt than we already have. **If we stop expecting what others may not or cannot give, we can stop some of the unnecessary hurt.**

HOW DOES A GRIEVING KID DEAL WITH SCHOOL?

Going back to school is always tough, but when there has been a death in your family, it's really hard. You wonder how your friends will treat you. You don't think you can concentrate or listen very well because your mind feels all confused. You worry how the rest of your family will be without you around. You feel so different, and school is sure to be just the same!....

Sometimes kids and teachers don't know what to say, so they say something dumb or don't say anything at all. Some days it can seem almost impossible to keep from crying in front of people. Everyone thinks you should be "over it" right away.

Dana (age 12): "Fortunately the kids treated me very considerately. But the teacher wasn't as nice. She thought I was using my father's death to make her go easy on me. But as all of us know, That's not how it is. We can't help it if we get upset. But some people don't understand."

School can be very hard for a kid who is grieving the death of a loved one. Some things that might help a little are: Talk with your teacher about what you want the class to know about the death and who should tell them. Make a plan with your teacher so you can leave the room if you start feeling very upset. Try to find a safe quiet place to go: the library, the nurse's office, etc. If people ask you questions that you don't want to answer, say something like, "I'd rather not talk about that right now." Try to find at least one person who you feel comfortable talking to when you want to talk. Or start to write your thoughts in a journal..

If you are bothered by what other kids say, try to talk to them and get them to understand that you need their support. If that doesn't work, talk with your teacher or a parent. If you think that your teacher doesn't understand, do your best to talk with her, and bring in an understanding adult to help if necessary.

To keep up with your homework, maybe you could study with a friend or get an older student to help you, or ask your teacher for some extra time. As long as you are really trying, that's all anyone should ask of you.

As you go through the school year there will be some good days and some tough ones. Don't be upset with yourself if you don't do as well as usual on grades, or you have trouble getting along with your same old friends. Be patient with yourself, because you want everyone to do the same for you.

Grief is a big long process that changes people, and change can be tough. But change can bring good things too. Perhaps you will find yourself appreciating the little things more, or being kinder to people, or wanting to make the most of your time, or developing an ability to express yourself creatively. These are things you don't normally learn in school, but these are things you learn from living.

By Dana Ward, Erin Helmer & Barb Coe.

Taken from the 8/88 news letter of Fernside, a center for grieving children and their families located in Cincinnati, OH.

A MOMENT OF HELP

After I lost my son Nino to a drowning accident, a young scientist walked into my office at Denver University. He was always extremely detached in his interactions with people, so I was not surprised that he asked almost casually whether I was feeling better.

I could not answer his question, because I had already started to cry. "Would you rather not have had a son at all?" he wanted to know. I shook my head and cried harder.

He handed me his handkerchief and said firmly, " I suppose you need to cry yourself well." And without even a hint of emotion, he sat down facing me.

In the presence of so much detachment, I managed to recover my "composure." But the visitor took my hand and held it silently, until I began to cry again. Then he said, " Keep crying. You are not well yet."

I will not forget this encounter. It told me two things when I very much needed to hear them. First; the expression of grief is necessary. And second; after a great sorrow, we can expect - in time - to be "well" again.

Sascha Wagner

TO MY HUSBAND

Your tears flow within your heart,
Mine flow down my cheeks.
Your anger lies with thoughts and movements.
Mine gallops forward for all to see.
Your despair shows in your now dull eyes.
Mine shows in line after written line.
You grieve over the death of your son,

I grieve over the death of my baby.
But we're still the same, still one.
Only we grieve at different times.
Over different memories and at different lengths.
Yet we both realize the death of our child.

Pam Burden, Augusta, GA. TCF

NOW I KNOW

Now I know
What I've never known before,
That robot feeling, that alien tide,
I'd never known, I'd never felt before.
A new dimension in my life:
GRIEF

Now I know
What I'd never known before,
The true meaning of THAT WORD.
Unspeakable, hellish, damnable, maddening,
Every insidious definition in the Book of Life:
GRIEF

Now I know
What I'd never known before,
Roads others have not had to tread,
Not strange, defenseless paths,
Not dizzying mazes of the mind:
GRIEF

GRIEF FOR THE LOSS OF A CHILD

Dave Ziv

TCF - Bucksmont Chapter, PA

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD

When a child dies, a light goes out in the world, never to be replaced. We are overcome by pain and heartbreak which is beyond measurement and completely unable to comprehend any meaning behind such a tragedy. The loss of such a young life, the finality of it can hardly be fathomed. We search in vain for an answer to why a life so full of promise and unfulfilled potential has been torn away so prematurely.

At first it seems as if our lives, our souls, the very innermost substance of our being has been shattered, never to be resurrected again. Our tears, our anguish, conceal any legacy that remains of the child's existence. It is as if we are enveloped in a cloud of darkness and deep despair. The reality of the death is as unforgiving as the sky, the sea, the earth and all eternity.

Our grief and anguish is unrelenting and unyielding in its intensity. Although we know that death can come quickly, with no warning to any living creature, never in our wildest dreams did any of us imagine that one of our children should be taken -- a reversal of the natural order.

The inevitability of birth, life, and death blankets us with a feeling of futility about the uselessness of it all. It is hard to remember that during the child's short and transitory time on earth, he or she contributed a unique essence of life, imprinting an image on all those who were touched. Therein lies the child's legacy -- the only bridge connecting the chasm between the living and the dead .

For each of us the legacies left by our children differ in detail, yet at the same time, are similar with respect to the precious memories which are all that remain to provide comfort.

At first we are inconsolable, but gradually the reaching out of heart and hand by those who understand and can respond to such a loss touches the soul, helps soothe the unbearable pain and intense suffering. Only a parent who has lost a child can give such a gift to another bereaved parent.

As in any event there is a lesson to be learned. An opportunity emerges from the sorrow, an opportunity to sort out trivia, old resentments, to perceive with clear vision that in our lives which is truly important. The tragedy we have experienced somehow enables us to establish new and more meaningful priorities, to love and to value those who are close with a renewed sense of appreciation and awareness. If any meaning is ever again to exist in our lives, it will develop as a result of newly found sensitivity, love and compassion for others.

Chris Moon, TCF, Rio Linda, CA

I was down, -- all the way below the bottom of the bottom.

I don't know how I got up.

I remember weeping a long time -- until someone wept with me.

Then -- my weeping stopped.

Marilyn Pheminster TCF Rockford, IL