



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

OCTOBER 2015

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

- Oct 1 General Sharing
- Oct 9-11 2015 E. PA Regional Conference
See page 3 for information
- Nov 5 General Sharing
- Dec 13 World Wide Candle Lighting

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.

ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations (which we call love gifts) given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved. Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.

If you donate to United Way at your place of work, and wish your contribution to go to the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, you may do so by entering: **The Compassionate Friends - Valley Forge Chapter United Way ID# 04-104.** on your pledge form.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: CHAPTER LEADER
RHONDA GOMEZ**

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TCF Mission Statement

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

INSIDE VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER

We send our love and compassion to the family and friends of *Dennis Kearns, Sr.*, who past away on September 9th from a serious head injury he received from a fall on September 1st. He is survived by his wife, Gwen, and 3 living children, Karolee, Minetola, and Darren.

Dennis & his wife Gwen joined the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends after the loss of their son, Dennis J. Kearns, Jr. (September 1993). Gwen has been very supportive of the Valley Forge Chapter, she served on the Chapter Steering Committee, and also as a greeter.

NEW PEOPLE

Ginger Jarret, daughter *Adrienne* (25years old)
Shannon Mastronardo, son *Keith* (25 years old)

REFRESHMENTS

Gwen Kearns, in loving memory my son, *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* on his birthday 9/18 and his anniversary - 9/28.

Rhonda & Frank Gomez, in loving memory of our son, *Frankie* on his birthday 9/20

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

LOVE GIFTS

Adam Blasucci in memory of all children who have died too soon.

Myer Bobrow Foundation in loving memory of *Steven Schneibolk*, son of Pamela Schneibolk, and grandson of Marie & Ken Hofmockel.

Marcia & Harold Epstein in loving memory of our grandson, *Andrew Voluck* on his birthday 10/12.

Rachel Himmelstein in loving memory of my son, *Benjamin Himmelstein* on his birthday 9/25.

Marie & Ken Hofmockel in loving memory of *Dennis Kearns, Sr.*

Janis Siravo in loving memory of my son, *Chris Siravo*, on his birthday 10/7.

Shannon & Dennis Mastronardo in loving memory of our son, *Keith J. Mastronardo*.

Rose Yanni in loving memory of wonderful nephew, *David*, on the anniversary of his 52nd birthday 10/26. David was truly a special nephew, I still miss him.

I have lots of good memories, and think of him often.

Butterfly Release - September 12 Upper Merion Township Park



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

As you know a Regional Conference is being planned for October 9-11, 2015 at the Radisson Hotel in King of Prussia, PA.

We hope you will take the opportunity to share the conference weekend with us. It will be an indescribable experience with bereaved families who have "been there", and know the depth of the pain. There are no strangers, or social barriers, everyone becomes an instant friend. We share our emotional feelings with one another.

There will be seasoned bereaved families, who have proven life can be meaningful once more. They have learned to love, laugh, and live again, and know the love and memories of our children and siblings have not diminished.

**EPA REGIONAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORMS MAY BE PRINTED
FROM THE VALLEY FORG WEBSITE www.tcfvalleyforge.org**

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.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- Chip Arena, son *Nick* 10/10
Carole Bailey, son *Matthew J. Bailey* 10/6
Victoria Bayle, son *Bobby D Bayle III* 10/5
Nina Bernstein, son *Andrew Voluck* 10/12
Joe & Maryann Bucci, son *Dante* 10/7
Martha & Albert Caesar, son *Daniel Mark Caesar* 10/18
Diana Clark, grandson *Alexander* 10/16
Theresa L. Cole, son *Christopher Michel* 10/10
Laureen Cole, brother *Chris* 10/10/
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 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
Janet Higgins, son *Nicholas* 10/10
Lori Joseph, son *Andy* 10/6
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, 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

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS CONTINUED

Mike & Diane Rogers, daughter *Jacqueline Ann Rogers* 10/3
Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* 10/29
JoAnne Sands, son *Tyler* 10/16
Joy Conard Settles, son *R. Gary Korn* 10/5
Robert & Nell Shoemaker, daughter *Brynn Shoemaker* 10/5
Betsy Townsend, daughter *Wendy Townsend Besche* 10/25
Janice Vanderslice, son *Gregory Vanderslice* 10/4/
Lucia Watters, daughter *Luanne Zambino* 10/14
Mimi & Tom Weber, *Michael* 10/8
Beth Williams, son *Joey Burke* 10/28
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, nephew *Steven Schneibolk* - 10/2/
Herb and Fran Barnett, son *Andrew* - 10/16
Victoria Bayle, son *Bobby D. Bayle III* - 10/2
William 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
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
ohn 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* - 10/22/05
Barbara Purtell-Frank, son *Michael John Keller Purtell* - 10/29

OCTOBER Anniversaries Continued

- Ruth Pluck**, niece *Jackie* - 10/5
Robert & Barbara Pontician, son *Rob Pontician* - 10/28
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
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, Jr.* - 10/16
Jackie Wesley, daughter *Teresa Ellen Wesley Hough* - 10/2
Theresa Wigand, daughter *Dawn* - 10/18
Beth Williams, son *Joey Burke* - 10/4/
Paul & Marcia Woodruff, son *Danny Woodruff* - 10/29
-

To my daughter & beloved angel, *Luanne* on your birthday in heaven...

The moment that you died my heart was torn in two.
One side filled with heartache, the other died with you.
I often lie awake at night when the world is fast asleep,
and take a walk down memory lane, with tears upon my cheeks.
Remembering you is easy I do it every day,
but missing you is a heartache that never goes away.
I hold you tightly within my heart, and there you will remain,
until the joyous day arrives, that we will meet again.

Always & Forever in My Heart....."MOMM-IE"

Author Unknown
Submitted by: **Lucia Watters**

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GROWING THROUGH SHARING

As I observe the intensity of Parental Grief in the newly bereaved, I see my past self with all the vivid memories of fresh pain. Hopefully, you can see healing and hope as you look at us, the more seasoned bereaved. Much of our healing comes from the caring and understanding of other Compassionate Friends, who helped to restore meaning to our lives again.

There will always be some clouds, even though the storm of grief is over. But, that gut-wrenching pain that used to come without warning or mercy has left, and the residue is tolerable. There is life after grief. You can restore love, hope, find a purpose for living, and a measure of peace. Unfortunately, these things lie on the other side of grief. We must first walk in the valley to find them, but we don't have to walk alone.

Sharing can lessen our loneliness, and help remove the feeling of isolation during our grief. A hug, a touch, or a knowing look can give reassurance that we are normal, in our very abnormal situation. Just speaking our loved ones names and sharing memories gives us a measure of healing. Life can be more bearable if we feel their nearness. One of our concerns is the world may forget our child or sibling. Fresh grief tends to remember the death, but as we heal we concentrate more on the life of our loved ones. The intense pain is caused by the great love we have for them, and the love they had for us. At some point, we have to be thankful for the time we had, even though we all agree it was not long enough.

We can find creative ways to memorialize and have our child or sibling live through us. They can not physically be a part of our life, but they can make us even more of who and what we are in this world. Their memories can give us courage and hope to lead a productive life again. It can even cause us to reach out to others in pain and offer comforting words by saying "I know".

The school season can bring a flood of tears as we watch children going to and from school. It reiterates that our children will not enter the next year of development. We hope you will come to meetings to share with us, it is the one place we can feel comfortable and a sense of normality. Regardless of what you are feeling, you can be certain someone else in the room has dealt with the same problem. We welcome discussion on both negative and positive subjects. Many times we have to deal with the negative side of grief before it can become positive. Come share with us. We care.

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

LIFE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT

Life is what we make it, I said with the confidence of youth.
My own well-ordered life would be the shining proof.
That ills that befall others, would never come to me.
But, then from nowhere came a blow that made me with pain.
The illusion of control was gone never to come again.
Life isn't what we make it, I railed against this bitter fate.
But only how we take it, and this I refuse to take.
But gradually acceptance came and with it some release.
Of the vice-like grip upon my heart of rage & anguished grief.
Life is what we make it, I slowly came to know.
If only in the way we take its unexpected blows.

Roberta Robertson

I FEEL THE JOY

Never let there be a time when
I cannot feel the pain,
When hurt and sadness
are blocked out,
And only numbness reigns.
At least with pain I am alive,
But numbness will destroy,
For if I cannot feel the pain,
Then I cannot feel the joy.

Joanetta Hendel
TCF, Indianapolis, IN

BEATITUDES FOR THOSE WHO COMFORT

Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not always have a quick “comforting” answer.

Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved’s closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.

Blessed are those who hear with their hearts and not with their minds.

Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.

Blessed are those who admit their uncomfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.

Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.

Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.

Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.

Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

Jacki Deems

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

Hi. My name is **Marlene Boylan**.

My sister, **Tiffany** died June 10, 1994. She was 13 years old. She died of a train accident. Her friend **Tammy** died too. Tammy was 14 years old. Both families miss them but it has to be like this. People still put flowers and crosses up at the tracks. I know everyone must suffer, but soon we will be back home.

*Marlene Boylan, age 11
Valley Forge, PA*



Scott was good to me. He is the best brother anyone could have. Here are some memories of him: We always wrestled. When I was 6, I went to an Orioles game with him. I used to help him with his home work. He was a caring person. He taught me all I know. He died of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy when he was 11, and I was 6. I miss him so much. It's been 4 years now since he died and I never forgot him. Oh, I really miss you Scottie.

*Greg Rosenthal, age 10
Valley Forge, PA*



TO MY SISTER

You touched us all
You loved us all
Forever giving
Forever caring
Forever forgiving
Never wanting to return.
Blessed are those who shared your life
Rich are those who carry your memories
Please rest now
Your chores we will finish.
Till we meet again ...

*Cindy Kelz
Arlington Heights, IL*

WHY CAN'T I LET GO

You were always my hero.
I always wanted to be like you.
You were my younger brother,
Still, I always looked up to you.

You were always there for me,
Even when things were at their worst.
You helped me through my hardest trials,
And we always made it through.

Now as I set here, writing these words,
Remembering you and times gone by,
I'm trying to find a way to tell you,
I'm trying to say good-bye.

Nineteen years are just too many,
To just let you go,
I can't believe you're gone, you died,
And left me here alone.

Some days I'm fine,
Some days I'm low,
But most days,
I just miss you so.
It was you and me,
But now, what do I do?

Each night I ask why?
Why I'm so angry?
Why I can't cry?
Why I can't let you go?

I know we'll see each other again,
But the years seems so long.
I long for the day I'll see you again,
Waiting for me with open arms.
Brother, I love you and miss you so.
But now I need you most.
This time in my life is oh so hard,
I just can't let you go.

*Stephen Welch
TCF Sibling Group - St Louis, MO*

GRATITUDE: THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, *Mark*, died seven years ago.

At first, I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last seven years. I have learned three valuable lessons:

Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through “every parent’s nightmare” and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize, health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse whom they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child’s death a good thing. It just means that our child’s life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don’t “sweat the small stuff.” We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt, because we, too, have been there. “We know how they feel.”

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can’t. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Richard Edler,
Served on the The Compassionate Friends
National Board of Directors,
during his tenure he served as President.

HELPING OTHERS HELP YOU - 10 RULES FOR SELF HEALING

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you'll need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this "we must get together for lunch". Remind them that you're bound to have "down" times and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died -- and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be "doing so well" but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky and it's exhausting.
5. Ask your friends to care but not to pity you.
5. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.
7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.
8. Let your friends know too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.
9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.
10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can "walk off" feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.

Ruth Jean Loewinsohn

IF I SHOULD TELL YOU

If I should tell you
 That it will get better
 In time (just when I don't know)
 Will you look at me
 With lifeless, leaden eyes, with sagging shoulders,
 And turn away in forlorn disbelief?

If I should tell you
 That this damnation will fade
 Slowly, slowly, ever so slowly,
 As you battle the pain, such riveting pain,
 That enervates and drains your very being,
 will you believe me?

If I should tell you
 That that Gordian knot
 So relentlessly snarled
 Will gradually fray and unravel
 And you will start to rise up again.

If I should tell you
 I, too, like you have been there,
 Have struggled, rebounded, and
 fought my way back.
 The nights will become softer,
 The days less relentless.

If I should tell you
 You will live again, you will live again.
 And somehow, somewhere,
 You will love again, you will love again.
 And embrace, and caress, and encompass
 The memory of that beautiful child of yours.
YOU WILL.

Will you believe me? Please do.

Dave Ziv - Bucksmont Chapter, PA



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Chapter Leaders
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343

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**...A bereavement organization
For parents, siblings & families
We offer friendship, love and understanding
We talk, we listen, we share, we care**

The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength; while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression; while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. ©2007