

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month, at 7:45 PM (ending at 9:30 PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Founders Hall, Valley Forge Road and Henderson Rds., King of Prussia, PA.

For info call Rhonda (484) 919-0820

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of Interest.

Meeting - 10/5/2023

Future Meeting - 11/2/2023

The Butterfly Release has been
Postponed until Sept.30 at 3 pm.



October 2023

Chapter Leader:

Rhonda Gomez
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore PA 19343
(484) 919-0820 Chapter cell phone

Email: rhonda@tcfvalleyforge.org

Newsletter Publisher:

Rhonda Gomez

Love Gift Acknowledgements:

Connie Nolan

Treasurer: Joe Purifico

Librarian: Carole Bailey

National Headquarters

48660 Pontiac Trail
#930808

Wixom, MI 48393

Toll Free: (877)969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

email: [nationaloffice@](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

compassionatefriends.org

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 editor.

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 the 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.

Please make all checks Payable to:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
Send to Rhonda Gomez

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 FRIENDS

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We all have been in the depths of despair, and offer unconditional love and understanding to all of you, it sometimes takes several meetings to feel the full benefit of group sharing. We offer confidentiality, unconditional love and understanding to all of you.

No new friends

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.

The Chapter

LOVE GIFTS

Susan M. Lawlor — In memory of her son, Jim Sinah
Barry & Kathy Morasco & Cindy & Dereb Morasco - in memory
Of their mother

Butterfly Release and Program

Saturday,, September 30, 2023

Upper Merion Township Park

175 West Valley 'Forge Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406

The cost of each Butterfly is \$6.50

'Everyone is Welcome – Bring a Friend

For any questions, please call the TCF Valley — 484-919-0820

"In remembering our children,
I in sharing with each other,
In supporting each other,
We ease our pain,
We share each step,
We help smooth the road,
And we serve as witnesses
to the fact that we can
make it beyond grief,
As we support each other."

Roy Peterson.TCF

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.

Anniversaries

Dianne Algeo - Skylar - Granddaughter - 10/8
 Marilyn Anton - Steven Schneibolk - nephew - 10/2
 Victoria Bayle - Bobby D Bayle III - son - 10/2
 Cindy Brickley - Timothy - son - 10/20
 Sally Cahill - Tim - grandson - 10/20
 Gina Cappelli - Dan Foley - son - 10/9
 Tina & Mike Cusamano - Amanda Angelucci - daughter - 10/1
 Tom & Marge Del Rosario - Dominic - son - 10/17
 Virginia Di Fronzo - Sis - daughter - 10/4
 Joseph & Patsy Dooley - Peter J. Dooley - son - 10/1
 Shirley & Herb Druker - Heidi - daughter - 10/25
 Jim and Patty Duffy - Michael Duffy - son - 10/28
 Peggy Furey - Kevin Furey - son - 10/8
 Heather Gabell - Marin Gabell - son - 10/2
 Bonnie Gardner - Michelle - daughter - 10/19
 Thomas & Anne Glenn - Lauren Glenn - daughter - 10/15
 Charlotte and Michael Gormish - Douglas Moyer - brother - 10/19
 Carol Graber - Bobby - son - 10/28
 Herb & Karen Grant - Shaun - son - 10/21
 Mary Green - Paul Green - ,10/12
 Thomas & Virginia Hoesch - William E. Buddy Hoesch - son - 10/7
 Joan Hornsby - Jackie - daughter - 10/5
 Jean Jones - Bobby - grandson - 10/28
 Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr. - Edward Kiefski, Jr. - son - 10/25
 Maureen and Pat McCormick - John McCormick - son - 10/4
 Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy - Barilyn Mountjoy - daughter - 10/3, Maralin Mountjoy - daughter - 10/3
 John B. & Lillian Neff - Patrick Neff - son - 10/17
 Gary & Patricia Otto - Benjamin Otto - son - 10/17
 Joan Palumbo - Michael - son - 10/13
 Betty Jane Peters - Neilson - Martin A Peters - son - 10/22
 Ruth Pluck - Jackie - niece - 10/5
 Robert Pontician - Rob Pontician - son - 10/28
 Barbara Purtell Frank - Michael John Keller Purtell - son - 10/29
 Marge Randolph - Doug Fixter - son - 10/12
 Robert & Nancy Ricciardi - Jessica Lee Ricciardi - daughter - 10/7
 Ilene & Sy Rockower - Amy Rockower - daughter - 10/17
 Mary Rose - Donald - Husband - 10/7
 Barbara Rossman - Kickole Lyn - daughter - 10/12
 Ron & Sandy Ruth - Brian David Ruth - son - 10/21
 Jo Anne Sands - Tyler - son - 10/16

Anniversaries - Cont'd

Carol Sannella - Robert J. Sannella - husband - 10/21
 Pamela Schneibolk - Steven - son - 10/2
 Susan Snyder - Brian David - son - 10/22
 Ruth Thomas - David George Thomas - son - 10/28
 Kimberlee Tonetti - Jack - son - 10/30
 Barbara Torrens - Robert Birmele - brother - 10/21
 Weldon & Marie Tyson - Lisa M. Tyson - daughter - 10/26
 Tina Ulshafer - Jimmy - son - 10/30
 Susan Utain - Alex - son - 10/29
 Elizabeth & Henry Weaver - Donald Smith, Jr. - grandson - 10/16
 Beth Williams - Joey Burke - son - 10/4
 Paul & Marcia Woodruff - Danny Woodruff - son - 10/29

Opinion Piece

CAREGIVING, EMPOWERMENT AND MOSTLY WOMEN

Let's begin with this little bit of aspirational advice from the fabulous super-senior, Betty White. "Get at least 8 hours of beauty sleep – [make it] 9 if you're ugly." Quite funny, but totally unrelatable to many caregivers whose sleep schedule is more of an on-again, off-again affair; quite like riding a dysfunctional carousel some of the time; quite unpredictable most of the time – yet they are quite adept at being "battle-ready" at a moment's notice because they never know when someone will declare that "war" is imminent. Most caregivers don't even have enough energy left after dealing with the "resistance" to make it to the beauty part. How we often appear to you is exactly how we often feel. Draw your own conclusions here, but don't bother telling me. I'm too tired to make out what you are saying, because it's been a long 24 hours. That is to say – the present state of caregiving in our society and its many challenges often exceed our ability to cope. We are missing public pressure to voice that this is intolerable.

The continuing need to revisit these issues confirms that the implied social contract we supposedly had with our country's leaders has indeed been relegated to the sidelines. Acknowledging the political and legislative components reflected in the life-altering social matters that affect both men and women, especially caregivers, is my motivation for continuing to write and advocate - to seek out sustainable, life-affirming solutions. During more than 35 years of being a caregiver for various family members, I struggled to set aside my personal feelings of loss while also sacrificing my career to commit to my totally disabled younger daughter - the whole time knowing she was on a "life-limited journey." Throughout, I was repeatedly forced to jump through often insurmountable bureaucratic hoops to provide that care. By default, I became a disability advocate and learned to navigate a fragmented, broken social safety-net. As you have probably realized too, either from personal experiences or anecdotally – "For all of us, our quality of life and the degree to which we can flourish depends on what others do." You get that it's not your fight – until it is. And then you somehow manage to dig deeper to gather all your resources to mitigate the damages.

We know there is a mental benefit to helping others in general because the feel-good hormones kick in, but if we neglect our own needs in the process; if we don't check in with our body's stress signals when we are over-obligated, we could be left with detrimental side-effects all clamoring for attention with names like – Stress; Depression; Guilt; Helplessness; Tension and yes, Resentment – totally manifestations of anxiety, leaving us desperately searching for a pressure release valve. As caregivers, we interact with our society's most vulnerable, but they are only one component of our complicated story. The natural uncertainty that comes with making connections in life, the fear of rejection or being excluded, coupled with the stressful urgency that presents itself when we must ask for help, exposes another vulnerability – our own. (continued on Page 6)

BIRTHDAYS

Bill Padove & Jen Scaless - Zachary - son - 10/22
 Maryellen & Dick Abell - Brian Abell - son - 10/14
 Carole Bailey - Matthew J. Bailey - son - 10/6
 Victoria Bayle - Bobby D Bayle III - son - 10/5
 Nina Bernstein - Andrew Voluck - son - 10/12
 Marbeth Blocklinger - Parker - grandson - 10/14
 Jacqueline Bonney - Genevieve - daughter - 10/28
 Joe & Maryann Bucci - Dante - son - 10/7
 Andrea Caesar - Daniel Mark Caesar - son - 10/18
 Diana Clark - Alexander - grandson - 10/16
 Lauren Cole - Chris - brother - 10/10
 Theresa L Cole - Christopher Michel - son - 10/10
 Carole and Kevin Creighton - Ryan Kent Creighton - son - 10/7
 Nancy Dalton - Jay - son - 10/25
 Virginia Di Fronzo - Sis - daughter - 10/7
 Harold & Marcia Epstein - Andrew Voluck - grandson - 10/12
 Peggy Furey - Kevin Furey - son - 10/9
 Gwen & Walt Gearhart - Jamie Rogers - grandson - 10/29
 Daniel Gentry - Emily - daughter - 10/9
 Victoria Gerber - Brea - daughter - 10/31
 Virginia Hagen - Matthew D. Hagen - son - 10/20
 Linda Haines - Zackary Monroe McCarthy - son - 10/5
 Joanne Haley - Douglas Haley - son - 10/4
 Carl & Catherine Helwig - Michael Helwig - son - 10/9
 Janet Higgins - Nicholas - son - 10/10
 Lynn Kivlen - Brien Kivlen - son - 10/12
 Barb & Larry Lauchle - Gray - son - 10/23
 Maryann Lockyer - Keith - son - 10/23
 Maureen Lok - Jessica - daughter - 10/24
 Tracy Lukens - Parker - son - 10/14
 Jennifer & Michael Magee - Jacqueline Ann Rogers - sister - 10/3
 Dan Markle - Matt Markle - brother - 10/30
 James & Mary Beth Mattiford - Scott Mattiford - son - 10/15
 Mark & Kathryn McNally - Beth Ann McNally - daughter - 10/1
 Alexandra Milas - Demitra Vallianos - mom's sister - 10/16
 Fred & Marilyn Mountjoy - Barilyn - daughter - 10/3 & Maralin - daughter - 10/3
 Kelly & Hank Murray - John Murray - son - 10/30
 Peggy O'Brien - Rick O'Brien - son - 10/4
 Deborah Osting - Christopher Daniel Osting - son - 10/24
 Dale Pearlstein - Jeffrey - son - 10/18
 Roy Redman - Linda Inez Redman - daughter - 10/22
 Thomas & Jeri Bubbles Reinert - Thomas Reinert, Jr. - son - 10/21
 Carol Robinson - Jim Kearney - son - 10/4
 Mike & Diane Rogers - Jacqueline Ann Rogers - daughter - 10/3
 Donna Rogers - Jamie Rogers - son - 10/29
 Jo Anne Sands - Tyler - son - 10/16
 Joy Conard Settles - R. Gary Korn - son - 10/5



BIRTHDAYS - Continued

Robert & Nell Shoemaker - Brynn Shoemaker - daughter - 10/5
 Janis Siravo - Christian - son - 10/7
 Kimberlee Tonetti - Jack - son - 10/26
 Betsy Townsend - Wendy Townsend Besche - daughter - 10/25
 Susan Utain - Alex - son - 10/9
 Lucia Watters - Luanne Zambino - daughter - 10/14
 Mimi & Tom Weber - Michael - 10/8
 Beth Williams - Joey Burke - son - 10/28
 Sandra & Harry Wolfheimer - Ann Marie Wolfheimer - daughter - 10/10
 Frank Yanni - David Yanni - son - 10/26

(continued from page 4)

in the caregiving world where we often don't have a choice in what is required of us, we tend to accumulate these stress triggers by the boatload while struggling to stay on top of our challenges amid insufficient social supports. In order to scale down some of these issues we need to develop our own safety-net; we must also continue to nurture connections with others, because that effort changes our relationship to the circumstances. And that helps us cope. And that helps us survive. Having others willing to assist means not having to consider surrendering yet again to the circumstances at hand. It means we have taken the time to build some resiliency into our personal "eco-system" and have developed a back-up plan. We've added some 'protein powder' to our daily smoothie - to our reality, our basic structural BELT. We now also have SUSPENDERS in the form of those angels that invite us to lean on them when we've given it all we've got, but it still wasn't quite enough and are grateful when a Higher Power steps in to say, "Listen up folks - lend a hand here" and it just happens!

All caregivers, parents especially "have the right to assure their own survival above and beyond their duty to care for their loved ones." E. C. Stanton of women's suffrage fame proclaimed that self-development was a higher duty than self-sacrifice. She implied that you must have compassion for yourself above all else. We are all aware that chronic exposure to stress impairs not only memory function, but also cognitive reasoning and we need all our gray matter to be at attention, pointing in the right direction - front and center. Realize that most caregivers are women, by default and that more than half of all caregivers often pass - before the people they are caring for. This alone should indicate the extreme urgency in finding time to nurture the relationship you have with yourself. "When a decision doesn't happen with you - it happens to you."

When faced with making decisions affecting where you need to go next, prioritize your efforts to make the best choices ... sort of like maintaining an organized closet by deleting an item each time you want to make room for a new one. Like many women [my] intrinsic pleaser [often] fights with the external rebel [in me]." I came late to the realization that I don't need to please everyone all the time and eventually questioned why I ever thought so - probably partly due to nature, but also clearly a byproduct of nurture. I now embrace that good enough is good enough. I try to make space for what matters to me and to have that compassion for "self." And as gut-wrenching as it might be, sometimes I need to remind myself to just let things go. While animals shake their bodies vigorously to release stress and tension - perhaps, we humans should try our own version and yes, dance like we really mean it in case there IS no tomorrow - who knows - in the kitchen while the coffee is brewing, the cat is regarding you with an understanding stare and absolutely no one else is watching. I haven't totally figured things out yet, but I'm working on it.

Be that kind of woman that when your feet hit the floor every morning the devil says, "Oh crap, she's up."

Sigrid Hirschhorn writes about social issues and empowerment and how that affects all individuals, especially women. She is a retired educator and disability advocate and discusses our nation's approach to caregiving.

Sigrid Hirschhorn writes about social issues and empowerment and how that affects all individuals, especially women. She is a retired educator and disability advocate and discusses our nation's approach to caregiving with its inherent bureaucratic impact in her part-memoir/part-educational series entitled **A Belt and Suspenders**.

SHARED THOUGHTS ON GRIEF IS INVISIBLE, HELP OTHERS TO UNDERSTAND IT

Often the same holidays that once brought us much joy can now compound our depression, and be an abrasive time for the newly bereaved. We find it difficult to count our blessings, when such an integral person is gone from our lives, and with them went the sunshine of our tomorrows. Even those of us who are blessed with having surviving children, find it difficult to express our thankfulness. We are so all consumed with such enormous feelings of love and loss, that we cannot think past our pain. It is important to forgive ourselves for our feelings, for they are human and normal. I believe they are acceptable with our Supreme Being, for he is probably the only one who genuinely knows the depth of our despair, how long and hard the journey of grief is, and how the pain penetrates our very soul.

Our support system ends about the same time the insulation of shock wears off. If we were an amputee, those around us could see not only do we have to adjust to making a new and different life for ourselves, but also live with the fact we are no longer whole. Our loss is not visible, so it is not fair to expect or blame our friends and family for not knowing what to do or say. They try to shield themselves from our pain, and the uncomfortableness. This leads to wanting to rush us through our grief so they can feel better faster. Many of us may have responded in the same manner prior to learning about grief first hand. We hurt ourselves when we cut off family and significant friends. It is much more helpful to express our needs in a loving manner, and educate the world on grief of bereaved parents and siblings. Most will appreciate your telling them how to help you. But, if we express our needs in an abrasive manner, we cannot expect a positive response. One of the major difficulties is we don't know how to help ourselves, and are not honest about how we feel on a daily basis.

Many times we try to run away from our feelings, for they frighten us. We should not lay an issue aside, until we have dealt with it. We need to intentionally plan time to talk about our child or sibling, our frustrated love, the shattering of our future dreams, and how this has reduced us to feeling non-productive and a sub-standard human being. It can take a lot of sharing of feelings to learn to love ourselves again. Once we love ourselves, it is much easier to love others.

It took a lot of healing before I could be glad there was a tomorrow. It took a lot of guilt before I could realize a moments rest, or a laugh, was not forgetting my child. We can learn to make the death less significant, the love for our child and the life they had be the purpose for remembering. Once we reach this plateau, memories are comforting, the gut-wrenching pain subsides, and we make life meaningful once again. We wish you the strength to bear your grief, and find a meaningful tomorrow.

Marie Hofmockel,
TCF Valley Forge

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.

The Compassionate Friends Credo



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

Valley Forge Chapter
of the Compassionate Friends
Rhonda Gomez
Chapter Leader
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore PA 19343



**The
Compassionate
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