

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

SEPTEMBER 2011

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

Sep 1 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Sep 17 Butterfly Release (see page 3)

Oct 7 General Sharing

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 FRIENDS

Chris Carlton, brother *Eric* (41)

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

AUGUST REFRESHMENTS

Carol Bailey, for all the children & siblings
Nina Bernstein, for all the children & siblings
Mary Lou Harrison, son, *Scott* on his birthday
Rhonda Gomez, brother *Donald* on his birthday

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

LOVE GIFTS

June & Tsuneo Fujita, in loving memory of our daughter *Sharon Kimi* (43)
Barbara Jacobs in appreciation for the newsletter
Gwen & Dennis Kearns, in loving memory of our son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* whose birthday is September 18, and the anniversary of his death is September 28.
Maryellen & James Madden, in loving memory of our daughter
Anne Marie Madden (15)
Mary & Donald Rose, in loving memory of our daughter *Marjorie Rose Cotteta* on her birthday September 30.
Carol Sannella, in loving memory of my son *David* (19)
Dorothy Seifert, in loving memory of my son *Richard* (36)
Deborah Walter, in loving memory to *Evan* our our beloved Son, Brother and Friend.
Forever in our Hearts.

RESPONSE FEATURE ON VALLEY FORGE WEBSITE

The Valley Forge website has a feature for you to leave comments and suggestions that you would like to see in the Chapter Program. Please voice your opinions on how the Chapter is being conducted, and ways we might improve the program. The chapter belongs to all of us, please support it.

**BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO ATTEND**

**SPRINGTON MANOR FARM
806 Springton Road, Glenmore, PA 19343
Phone: 610-942-2450, Option #1**

**Saturday, September 17, 2010 at 11:00AM
(this event will be held rain or shine)**

It is too late to still order butterflies, but you are very welcome to attend this event. The Butterfly Release will be held under a large shade tree. (not the Butterfly House). Water will be provided by the chapter. Please bring folding chairs or a blanket to sit on.

There is a Butterfly House which is home to many different species of butterflies, both native to Pennsylvania and exotic species. The Butterfly House provides educational opportunities for all ages, learning styles and audiences. House Hosts will guide you through the butterfly habitat, sharing all sources for water, food and shelter during each of the life stages; egg, caterpillar, chrysalis/pupa and butterfly. (\$2 per person fee to tour the Butterfly House).

Directions from King of Prussia - approximately 30 minutes driving time.

Go south on route 202 (DeKalb Pike), continue to follow 202 S for 14 minutes
Take exit onto route 30 W toward Downingtown/Coatesville for 8 minutes
Exit onto route 322 W Horseshoe Pike/Manor Ave. continue to follow 322 W for 6 minutes
Turn right onto Little Washington Lyndell Road
Take the 1st left onto Springton Road for 2 minutes
To 860 Springton Road, Glenmore, PA 19343

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.

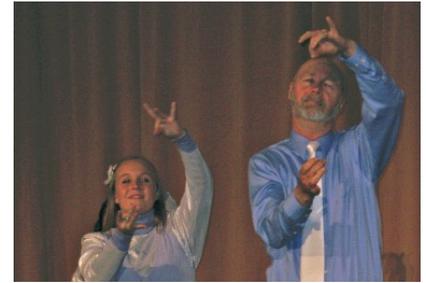
We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know **“We need not walk alone”**.

A newsletter helps to keep our TCF family informed of local and national events. We consider this an important function of our program.

We are asking if you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, you will have the option to switch back to the old method. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email please contact: **Frank Gomez fgomez@hybridpoplars.com**



Chapter Leaders



Signing Entertainment



34th TCF
National Conference
Minneapolis, MN



We walked to remember
It was hot & humid !!

These photos may be seen
In color on the VF 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 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.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jim & Michelle Angelini, son *Danny* 9/12
David Bonga, daughter *Amanda* 9/15
Marc & Jean Burock, daughter *Sophie* 9/1
Robyn Buseman, daughter *Maya Buseman-Williams* 9/30
Scott & Gail Campbell, daughter *Chelsea* 9/1
Chris Carlton, brother *Eric* 9/5
Judy & William Cosgrove, son *Michael Cosgrove* 9/4
Reno & Bonnie Crescimone, son *Jonathan* 9/5
Agnes & Alex Crisanti, Jr., son *John Crisanti* 9/6
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *G. Robert Daily, Jr.* 9/19
Catherine Dardozi, grandson *Evan Schmidt* 9/29
Robert Dilbeck, wife *Dolores Dilbeck* 9/4
Michelle G Doll, son *Justin* 9/1
Julie & Joe Fabrizio, brother *John Russel Bryant* 9/24
Sharon & Francis Gailey, son *Francis E. Gailey, III* 9/28
Molly Gehring, son *Daniel* 9/12
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, son *Frank Jr.* 9/30
Jeanne R Helmers, sister *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* 9/16
Gail & Calvert G. Hess, Jr., son *Calvert G. Hess, III* 9/4
Walt & Adele Higgins, son/stepson *Brian* 9/22
Michelle Hillstrom, daughter *Jen* 9/26
Jacob & Rachel Himmelstein, son *Benjamin Himmelstein* 9/25
Lesley Jones, son *Christopher* 9/14
Gwen & Dennis Kearns, son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* 9/18
Tobie & Herman Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp* 9/16
Jacque Kilroy, son *Shilen Kenneth* 9/4
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter *Danelle Rossi* 9/18
Marcia Kling, son *CJ* 9/20
Becky & Alan Logsdon, son *Nathaniel Logsdon* 9/25
Elaine & James Madden, son *Andrew Madden* 9/26
Frank & Bernadette McAllister, son *Christopher J. McAllister* 9/4
George & Barbara McClory, daughter *Susan* 9/9
Linda & Jim McGrath, son *Paul Drew McGrath* 9/26
Joan Michini, son *Adam Jonah Michini* 9/28
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* 9/12
Betty & Dick Miller, son *Raymond "Jim"* 9/1

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS continued

Barbara & Jeff Norris, son *Greg* 9/21
Mary O'Halloran, brother *Thomas M. O'Halloran* 9/1
Winnie & James O'Halloran, son *Thomas M. O'Halloran* 9/1
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* 9/15
Linda & Andrew Peoples, Jr., son *Brian A. Peoples* 9/7
Mary & Salvatore Perna, grandson *Nathan A. Bieber* 9/11
Robert & Nancy Ricciardi, daughter *Jessica Lee Ricciardi* 9/23
Ruth Richardson, grandson *Nicholas Richardson* 9/1
Gina & Brian Richardson, son *Nicholas Richardson* 9/1
Jacqueline Rider, daughter *Michelle Connelly* 9/24
Margaret Rodalewicz, son *Shane Wooley* 9/23
Donald & Mary Rose, daughter *Marjorie Rose-Cotteta* 9/30
Joan Santillo, daughter *Cathy Gambone* 9/9
son *Brian Gambone* 9/8
Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie* 9/27
Michelle & Bill Schmidt, son *Evan Peter Schmidt* 9/29
Cathy Seehuetter, daughter *Nina Seehuetter* 9/24
Cathy Siciliano, son *Anthony* 9/15
Helen Smith, son *Patrick Kenneth "Kenny" Smith* 9/5
Walter & Irene Stolarczyk, daughter *Barbara Stolarczyk* 9/11
Emil & Joy Tkachick, son *David L. Tkachick* 9/11
Sharon Venezia, son *Justin Negron* 9/9
Shelly Wagner, son *Andrew Wagner* 9/29
Terry & Susan Weikel, daughter *Jennifer* 9/26

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Laura Bedrossian, son *Teddy* - 9/24
Jeff & Donna Brown, son *Kenneth Bernstiel* - 9/12
Ann Bruner, sister *Katy Wade* - 9/27
Marc & Jean Burock, daughter *Sophie* - 9/17
Suzanne Carcarey, son *Eddie* - 9/21
Phyllis & James Casey, son *Jim "Jimmer" Casey* - 9/17
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Tom* - 9/1
Marie D'Angelo, son *Mark Anthony* - 9/12
Catherine Dardozi, son *James Dardozi* - 9/7
Michelle G Doll, son *Justin* - 9/4
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* - 9/15
Sherry Goldberg, son *Neal* - 9/3
Susan Goldberg, brother *Neal* - 9/3
Judi Griffith, son *Steve* - 9/4
Virginia Hagen, son *Matthew D. Hagen* - 9/28
Jeanne R Helmers, daughter *Betsy Helmers* - 9/7

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES continued

Nancy Lee & Jerry Hess, son *Jerry R.L. Hess* - 9/28
Barbara Jacobs, daughter *Pamela Faye* - 9/17
Margaret C Jones, son *Christopher* - 9/15
Gwen & Dennis Kearns, son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* - 9/28
Deborah Keevill, son *Brandon* - 9/1
Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son *Philip V. Kennedy* - 9/23
Tobie & Herman Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp* - 2/9
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* - 9/3
Karen & Francis Legieko, son *John Francis Legieko* - 9/25
Joanne & Thomas Lennen, son *Scott C. Lennen* - 9/2/
Maureen Lok, daughter *Jessica* - 9/25
Willard & Patricia McLain, son *Gary J. McLain* - 9/23
Jenna Melle, *Shi* - 9/4
Joan Michini, son *Adam Jonah Michini* - 9/7
Betsy Oakes, son *Bruce Schaeffer* - 9/2
Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J* - 9/8
Elsie Oreski, son *Gregory T. Oreski* - 9/3
Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison* - 9/22
Kathy & Jim Petrokubi, son *Andrew* - 9/26
Mary Jane Pollart, son *Mark Andrew Steffler* - 9/7
Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* - 9/10
Steve & Joann Reynolds, son *Chris* - 9/15
Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* - 9/16
Bonnie Rosen, son *Troy* - 9/29
Marie Schmeltzer, son *Sam "Sonny" Schmeltzer* - 9/11
Michelle & Bill Schmidt, brother *James Dardozzi* - 9/7
Janet & Jonathan Schultz, brother *Marc Ernest Stein* - 9/9/
Abigail Schwartz, brother *Jake* - 9/13
Gina Sebastianelli, brother *Tony Sebastianelli* - 9/28
Charles & Tish Shaw, son *Charles "Corky" Shaw* - 9/29
Ann Sherwood, daughter *Martha Sherwood Fransway* - 9/6]
Helen Smith, son *Patrick Kenneth "Kenny" Smith* - 9/17
Anne & Charles Swann, daughter *Katherine Anne Swann* - 9/7
Jean Sykora, son *Mark* - 9/27
Renee Teufel, son *Gregory* - 9/24
Emil & Joy Tkachick, son *David L. Tkachick* - 9/5/
Barbara Tuller, son *Charles* - 9/24
Weldon & Marie Tyson, son *Ronald C. Stewart* - 9/21
Sharon Venezia, son *Justin Negron* - 9/17
Lauretta Wagner, daughter *Traci Wagner* - 9/10
Muriel Wilson, son *John F. Shaffer* - 9/25
Gisela Witte, son *Bruce G Edlund* 960 - 9/22

SHARED THOUGHTS ON THE RETURN OF SCHOOL OPENINGS

Many times seasonal changes can create a mood swing that can bring a setback in our grief progress. Mental health studies have shown depression to be greater, as we physically and mentally adjust to a new season. We often note a sagging morale that adds stress this time of the year.

September is particularly a hard month for families whose children would have been returning to school. The display of school clothes, books, bags, and busses can cause intense pain by reminding us that our future dreams of that child are gone forever. We long to bring back the happier days, when September brought excitement of shopping for that special back-pack, or lunch box for our child entering a new grade. We remember the feeling of pride that our child was progressing and meeting the high aspiration we had for them.

It is very natural that we connect their growth and development with the school calendar. Many have warm feelings about the relationship their child had with the school system. Particularly if the child was an honor student, involved in sports and school activities, and received much recognition for their accomplishments. While others have had bad experiences, that create a rage at the thought of how their child was mistreated, misplaced, and misunderstood, or was denied participation in a particular program, or was just plain ignored, and received no recognition for their efforts. Regardless of what category our children fell into, the beginning of the school year can stir deep emotions. It is very normal for us to wish we could return to the days when our life was simple, and our biggest decisions were what to pack for their lunches, and which piece of new clothing should they wear on the first day of school, and to share in the excitement as they headed for the bus to meet their friends.

As we experience moments of nostalgia watching other people's children return to school, our fragmented lives may feel additional emptiness. It is very painful when life goes on without our child. This is a season that makes memories very vivid, and brings home the thought that our children did not get the opportunity to complete their life, as we had planned it for them.

Most often it is best to take time to remember, and allow ourselves to hurt. Suppressing emotions does not generate healing. We need a friend who will listen and try to understand (this can be very difficult for a non-bereaved person). Giving and receiving love is very essential to life, and particularly to our healing. Our showing expressions of love to others can help a heavy heart as much as receiving it. We all need one another.

Eventually our pain does soften, and the very memories that brought us pain, can bring smiles and meaning into our lives again. Unfortunately we have to go through the bitter to become better.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

AS TIME PASSES

As time passes
And others forget
Day by day
I enter my lonely
Room of memories
And broken dreams
And I cry.

And each day
As I push forward
I move a step ahead
And then back
But still gaining
If even but a little.

Mary Rapke
TCF, Grand Junction, CO

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Going back to school after the death of your brother or sister is a hard thing to go through. At first there are three groups of people to deal with: people who give you a lot of support, people who don't know what to say, and those who give you weird looks and stay away from you. This lasts for a little while.

After a short time changes with each group occur. Those who did not know what to say start to speak or begin to talk. The group who kept away stop ignoring you. The people who gave you a lot of support slowly return to their own affairs. After a while everything goes back to normal, and it is over to everyone except you. This is very difficult to accept and makes you feel all the more alone.

After a long while the shock for you goes away, and it is then that you need the support from your friends, peers, and teachers. This month is the first anniversary of the death of my brother. Most people will have forgotten, and everything is right with the world. But it is not! Certainly not for my mother and me.

Jordan Ely TCF, Albany/Delmar, NY

Time does not really heal a broken heart;
it only teaches a person how to live with it.

A.L. Sheppard, Jr. Fort Worth, TX

ALL THE THINGS I MISS

I sometimes think about all the things I miss about my brother.

There are a lot - some painful, some I never would have believed at the time that I would miss. And I find that what I miss the most are the things that should have been.

I bought my first car the year he would have turned sixteen. He should have been here to ask to borrow the keys - not that I would have given them to him - but he should have been here to ask.

He should have been a senior this year, getting ready to face a world with no more summer vacations and deciding what to do with his life.

All the things that should be:

He should be here when I fall in love to tease me and give his opinion of the man I choose.

He should be here when I have a child to be godparent and uncle, friend and confidant.

He should be here to get married and have kids of his own, so that I can be an aunt and a sister-in-law.

He should be here to celebrate when things are good and to commiserate when things are bad.

My brother was my friend and my foe in a way that only little brother can be. And as I sit here and think about my brother, what I think the most is he should be here.

I love and miss you little brother.

Shannon Odessa Stiener Lowell, IN

She stood straight and told me of losses received with no evident trace of her volume of grief. This woman smiled, was matter of fact, showed no visible signs of the reaper's attack. But the wounds are so deep and the pain so intense that I knew her complaisance as a well built fence. To contain her distress in a public so brutal, so misunderstanding and harsh and futile.

The measure I sought I found in her eyes where suffering shows even after tears dry. So then her composure seemed less impressive and I gave her a hug to convey a message. That hug held us together for so long then I knew the strength of sharing with others who've traveled that road too.

Shana Parsons Valley Forge, PA

RESPECT THE LONELY SAILOR ON THAT VAST, DARK OCEAN

Recently, two acquaintances were discussing a man whose wife died a few months ago. It was time he gave away her things, they said. It was time he got over it.

I listened, silent, but started writing this column in my mind.

Dear friends, we have such a small understanding of grief and so little patience with the bereaved. It's time to find more of both.

Grief has no schedule. It would be so much easier on all of us if the pain of bereavement ended after three months, but it just doesn't work that way.

Sometimes after three months the reality of the loss is just beginning to sink in.

Grief is neither a sickness that can be cured nor a stage one can outgrow. Like any other milestone, it's a permanent addition to our self-definition. After the loss of someone we love, please don't expect us to snap out of it and be who we were before. Our old self and our old life died with our loved ones. However prepared we might have been, when they died we stepped through a door that has forever closed behind us. We can't go back.

Sometimes we feel like we're just going through the motions for the first year after a loss. Each holiday, anniversary and birthday looms like a tidal wave and hits us about that hard. The weeks or months in between are simply recovery from or preparation for the next unbearable event.

We have to get through all these significant dates at least once before we can understand how we'll get through the rest of our lives. It takes a full year to go through all of them, and then we still face the worst one of all, the first anniversary of the death.

Everyone grieves differently. Sleep, often elusive, is at least oblivion. Waking is dreaded. We may be clingy, we may have nightmares, we may be remote, we may cry often, we may never cry again.

We're often told time will heal us, but time is the enemy. We want to turn back the clock but it goes forward. It slows down in the worst parts and speeds up through the easy parts. Some days are excruciating. Some seasons are endless.

Eventually, things do change. But each person's grief takes its own good time. While a 1-month-old grief is unbearable and a 1-year-old grief is still raw, a 10-year-old grief is different.

Even after much time has passed, gently and caringly asking about a loss can be a kindness, especially when well-meaning friends have decided it's a taboo subject. One of the hardest parts of losing someone you love is the fear that he will be forgotten. So many times, the people who recognize our need to talk are those who've been where we are.

There's a strange kinship among the bereaved. We have lifetime memberships in a club no one wants to belong to. More than once, I've initiated conversations with near-strangers about subjects so private and painful others might have been shocked. But we understood each other. We recognized each other because we spoke the language of tragedy.

Everyone reacts differently to a loss. Some of us do things we'd never do otherwise. Please, be gentle in your opinions and understanding in your expectations. If you haven't gone through what someone else is experiencing, then trust me, no matter how compassionate you are, you don't know what it's like.

People speak of grief as if it were a tide that's come in and will soon recede. But grief is not the tide. Grief is what's left when the unimaginable occurs. It's the residue of horror, the aftermath of heartache, the uninvited guest who will not leave. It lingers, it hovers, it smothers. It's unrelenting.

Bereavement puts us on a small boat in a great ocean. Time, faith, love, friends and our own inner strength are the tides that can carry us to shore. But grief is the ocean, vast and overwhelming.

Once you've seen the ocean, you never see the world the same.

Jennifer Hansen

THE PATH

My world lay shattered around me. Gone were the flowers and the sun. The path ahead looked dark and threatening. I heard a voice saying, "You have to travel this path alone."

"I don't want to go down that path. I can't." I protested. "I liked the old path."

"The choice is yours," said the voice, "but you may never go back to the old path. You may stay here at the crossroads where anger and pain will keep you company and wither your spirit. Or, you may runoff into the surrounding woods and pretend you are going somewhere, but you will become disoriented and lost. The only peace is to be found at the end of the path ahead."

"If you have the courage to set forth upon the new path and keep struggling through the storms, you will discover depths in yourself that you never knew existed. If you reach out you will find those who have already traveled this difficult way and are there to support and guide you. Though it seems impossible now, your path will become beautiful again, as will your spirit. You will emerge from the desolation a stronger, wiser, and more compassionate person. Then you too can turn and extend your hand to those who are still on the way."

I made a choice. I picked up the remains of my life -- my aching heart and wounded spirit, my broken dreams and disbelief -- and wrapped them carefully in my blanket of grief. Holding them closely to me, I walked steadfastly ahead into the storm with faith in the promise of peace on the other side.

Sharron Cordaro, Riverside, CA

A boy was flying his kite. He kept adding more spools of string to make it go higher. A woman walked by and said, "you have that kite flying high." And the boy agreed. The woman left and went about her business. On her way back, she looked up toward the kite and said, "I do not see your kite." The boy agreed. She asked, "Then why don't you let go of it?" The boy answered, "I can't. I can still feel it tugging."

This is the plight of bereaved parents.

TCF of Tilton, GA

When love is strong and runs deep it pulsates with an energy that cannot be stopped, not even in death's grip.

When two souls are connected and one departs from this world, the separation may seem final, but in truth the relationship transcends time.

Love, like a river, flows eternal, and it embraces all those who swim in its streams.

Author Unknown

"He held me in his arms and made me share it and accept that his sorrow was as great as my own. He simply wouldn't allow my grief to divide us...push us apart, which is what happens so often where there is a loss like that.

And for as long as I live, I will respect and appreciate my husband for the strength of his understanding.

Barbara Bush

Bereaved Parent

1988 Republican National Convention
