



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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February

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Chapter 1562

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Our Mission: 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.

Meetings

Our chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church in Cherryville, PA

To be notified of meetings call or text the newsletter editor at 484-891-0823. We will add you to the notification list and you will be notified of upcoming meetings

Meetings are open to bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

Note: In order to meet safely all attendees must agree to the following

- Face masks shall be worn covering the nose and mouth at all times during meetings. Bandanas, Scarves etc are not acceptable
- Do not attend if you are feeling ill, have been exposed to Covid or have tested positive in the last 14 days
- Chairs will be preset to maintain social distancing
- No food is allowed

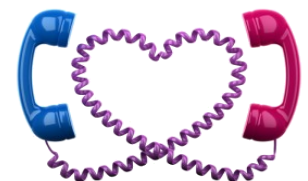
To Our New Members

Making the decision to come to your first meeting can be difficult. It can also be difficult to return for a second or third meeting, but we ask that you attend three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will work for you. We cannot walk your grief journey for you, but we can walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our circumstances may be different, we have all “been there”...we are all grieving the loss of a child and therefore we can truly say we understand. You are not alone.

Telephone Friends

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who cares and understands between meetings. To help we maintain a list of telephone friends. During these times the following members are available to listen, share and offer what support they can.

Infant Loss - Kim Szep -	610-730-3111
Only Child - Shelly Garst -	484-241-5396
Addiction - Nancy Howe -	484-863-4324
Homicide - Ginger Renner -	610-967-5113



To volunteer as a telephone friend contact the newsletter editor

TCF National Support Resources

The TCF National website has over 35 private Facebook pages and a number of moderated chatrooms. To register for the FB pages or chat rooms go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the find support tab and then choose online communities.

Newsletter Notes

This Newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter. We hope that it will be of some comfort to you on your grief journey.

We welcome original stories and poetry from our members.

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor (address listed above)

We reserve the right to modify or reject submissions not in keeping with our mission

If you move please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

Newsletter Editor Contact

- by mail:
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Precious Valentine Memories

By Darcie Sims



The lace has grown yellow with age. The edges are tattered and the glue that held the pieces together has long dried up, leaving only a slight stain on the faded red paper. It is much smaller than I remembered. Perhaps time has caused it to shrink. It seems so fragile, resting here in my palm. The words have nearly faded and even the heavy crayon marks have lost their luster over the years. There's a smudge of unknown origin on the back, near where the paper was rubbed dangerously thin by the uncounted erasure marks. The name is barely legible, the pencil lines so weak that only the mind can read the letters.

I found it the other day, while doing one of those winter chores: cleaning closets. It's nearly 25 degrees below zero outside and it seemed like a good idea to clear away some of the trappings of a thousand years.

February is a middle-of-winter month and most of us have fewer choices in this month than in any other. For those of us here in the Great North, it is either shovel the walk or clean the closets, and it's warmer in the closet (although not by much!) So, armed with a dust rag, trash bag and the radio, I opened the door and slipped in...not really about what I might find. I thought I was just going to clean the closet.

But, that first box sent me spinning. I found things I hadn't even remembered I'd lost! I finally found the holiday gift bought for my sister last year and then so carefully had hid away. I found snow boots and sand pails, a beach towel, three old paperbacks, a pile of magazines (all saved because I wanted to clip something "important"). I found shoelaces for shoes no longer "alive" and several other things that had once been alive. I found a half a chocolate-covered cherry and part of a deck of cards. It was quite a treasure box, filled with junk that once had had some meaning to someone, maybe even me.

I sorted through the coats and clothes, painfully aware that "someday" would probably not arrive in my life-time. The too short hemline and the too-small waist would not be mine again. I packed those things away, mindless of the hours and the drifting snow outside the windows. When I found the box of scrapbooks, I sat down, now that the closet had some actual floor space. I touched the bindings, not quite sure I possessed the courage required to open the pages. The phone rang and forced me away from that decision. I left the closet and did not return until now.

That's when I found the old paper Valentine, tucked away between the pages of a life lived long ago. As I held that once sticky, but now only stained, piece of construction paper, I felt a connection with other valentines, in other lifetimes. I heard a whisper of another voice: my own mother's exclamation over my offered gift. It blended with my voice speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love.

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Donations & Contributions

- ★ *Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA*
For our meeting space
- ★ *Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions*
In Memory of David Todd Smith
- ★ *The Matt Kush Foundation*
In Memory of Matt Kush
- ★ *Aetna Payroll Contributors*
- ★ *United Way Payroll Contributors*



Love Gifts

Love Gifts are tax deductible. They enable us to reach out to newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members. They may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Please use form in this newsletter to donate.

We thank the following this month for their generosity

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Lucille V. Radocha	Peter A. Radocha <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Mark & Kathleen Kilker	Colleen Kilker <i>We love and miss you, honey. Life is sweet! Mom, Dad, Meghan, Bridget, & Mark</i>
♥ Carol Faber	Marguerite "Maggie" Jo Faber <i>In Loving Memory</i>

Our Children Remembered

Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Hope Davidson - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson	Aug 8	Feb 8
Eileen Collins Gant - Daughter of The Late John & Dorothy Collins; Sister of John, Steven, Kathleen & Brian Collins & MaryAnn Watkins	Mar 25	Feb 14
Robert Grozier, II - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Feb 15	Jun 11
Brian Gum - Son of Geary & Brenda Gum	Feb 21	Mar 5
Heather Hawn - Daughter of Mike & Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
David Heard - Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	May 20	Feb 10
Matt Kush - Son of Rick & Ann Kush; Brother of Mike & Jenn	Aug 24	Feb 10
Ed McNally - Son of Don & Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally	Jul 29	Feb 11
Michael Milot - Son of John & Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
Mardelle Parenti-Blume - Daughter of Brian & Nancy Kleckner	Feb 9	Mar 1
Eric Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Feb 15	May 20
Nicholas Savacool - Son of Howard & Laura Savacool; Brother of Brandon, Candace & Lacie	Feb 27	Apr 1
Constance Stewart - Sister of Keith & Kevin Stewart; Daughter of Joanne Stewart	Sep 23	Feb 1
Stephanie Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zachary Volkert	Sep 22	Feb 12
Victoria Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zacary Volkert	Jan 14	Feb 16

*Of all the music that reached farthest into heaven,
it is the beating of a loving heart.*

Henry Ward Beecher

(Continued from page 2)

OH! I had forgotten THAT...it had become lost in the pain of losing you.

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of the scrapbooks. I found my own laughter and that of my friend, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts.

Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet...as if when I opened the door, the gift of this Valentine would still be waiting! Perhaps that is exactly what is happening, perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting - waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being. There were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have.

The snow had drifted deep across the yard: only the tips of my flamingos' knit-capped, covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace is faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and through the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me. So now, this little paper message from both my past and my future sits on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones.

I had "lost" that Valentine from so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones die, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and the memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your love DID LIVE - and what a sweet treat that will be!

"Where there is love, there is life"



A Valentine Sent To Heaven

Sheila Simmons, TCF Philippines

Angels come swiftly,
hurry to our side.
Carry our hearts back with you,
to our children who in heaven now reside.

Carry them gently,
handle them with care.
And take them to their sides,
and gently lay them there.

Whisper to them of our love,
and our longing hearts,
All our lonely aching
while we are apart.

Hold them gently to you,
and let them see our love.
Let them see this,
our Valentine to them above.

Reassure them of our love,
that it is still the same,
And gently hold us when we cry,
when we hear them whisper our names.

Let this exchange of love
be our Valentine,
And whisper to them that
our love will stand the test of time.

Show them the memories
are safely held inside,
And with us
they will always abide.

Let them see this day,
a day filled with our love
As we shed our tears, and whisper their names,
to our Valentines above.

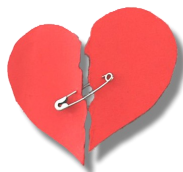
A Sibling's Feelings

Marie Porreca, TCF Rockland County, NY

The pain of a sibling is so real we sometimes hide it deep inside of ourselves. As we watch our parents hurting we see the pain in their eyes. We are also hurting not only for the loss of our brother or sister but also for our own parents.

We need to reach out to each other to let each other know we are hurting inside. Our lives have all changed forever. I know they lost a son but I lost my younger brother I loved, and as siblings we share a special bond that will never have anymore for he no longer lives...my brother, my friend.

I will always miss you and I will never forget you for you will always live in my heart, and I have wonderful memories no one can ever take away from me. In my heart you will stay, love you forever.



People Think

By Mary Matthews TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL

People think we're fine, you know
They say, "Oh, siblings heal so fast"
But they don't know the empty feelings
Of our long for the past

People think we're fine, you know
"Look how they've resumed their lives", they say
But they don't know of our troubled hearts,
Or the loneliness from day to day

People think we're fine, you know
"See how they're getting over it?"
They surmise but they don't know that we've
learned to laugh and smile,
Only to complete our broken heart's disguise

New Grief

By Linda Zelenka, TCF Orange Park Jacksonville FL

New grief is about a toothbrush
lying dry on the bathroom sink.
Its about a sweater tossed carelessly on his bed
It's about a folded bag of Cajun Chips with a few left
that he should have come back to finish.

It's about a folder neatly labeled "American History"
with notes about the balance of trade
scrawled in preparation
for some future reckoning some silly test.

It's about bumping into him
in the hall as he rushed out and I rushed in.
It's about every instant spent folding clothes
and only half listening, not really noticing
when I could have been studying his face,
hearing his needs, being with him.

It's about driving past the high school
where he should be
and being overwhelmed by mute,
inextinguishable rage.

New grief is about silence I can't speak across
and emptiness I can't reach across.
Most of all, it's about horrible,
unequivocal ... finality.

Old Grief



Older grief is gentler.
It's about sudden tears
wept in by a strand of music.

It's about haunting echoes
of first pain, at anniversaries.
It's about feeling his presence
for an instant one day while I'm dusting his room.

It's about early pictures that invite me
to fold him in my arms again.

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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.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753

TCF Easton - 610-515-3526

TCF Quakertown - 267-380-0130

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing)

TCF Pocono - 570 - 350 - 6695

484-863-4324 or 610-442-8490

Love Gift Form

Your love gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings, meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved. The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.

Deadlines are the 1st of the month previous to the month you wish publication in. Example the deadline for publication in January is December the 1st

Contributor Name *(this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)*

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JOHN SZABO
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BETHLEHEM, PA 18020

Email Address

I would like to make a donation of _____ In Memory of In Honor of A Chapter Gift *(without memorial or honorarium)*

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. *Deadlines listed above. Late submissions or those that do not indicate an edition will be published in the next edition.*

Special Text - Brief Messages Please. *Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.*

Please designate which of the following your gift is for (you may circle more than one)

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events