



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**



Volume 37 Issue 10

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**October**

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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 support group meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

**The Lehigh Valley chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA the second Monday of the month at 7pm**

For information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting text reminder list call or text 484-891-0823

Note: For the safety of all attendees

- Please use good judgement and do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

#### **Next Meeting October 9**

***Note: If we need to cancel the meeting we will notify everyone on the text list and post the cancelation on our facebook page - facebook.com/TCFLehighValley***

#### **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](http://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 below)

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

### Newsletter Editor Contact

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## The Isolation of Grief

Now, I've never been a stranger to the isolation that comes from feeling like you just don't fit into your surroundings. But I've never felt as isolated in my whole life as I have after the death of my daughter.

As a child, I was a shy, introverted person and often felt different than the people around me.

At the time, I never really knew why. While I didn't like the feeling of isolation, I didn't understand what caused it so it just became a fact of life. Over the years my shyness has lessened, but I still prefer interacting with small groups or one-on-one in person conversations, and still look forward to time alone. I've learned to accept it as my personality, and it works for me.

After my daughter died, my sense of isolation grew exponentially as a result of grief.

In the immediate aftermath of her sudden death, our house was filled with family and friends who were showing their support for us and helping us do what had to be done: planning the memorial, visiting the cemetery to secure a plot, working with our insurance company requirements, etc. They prepared meals, made sure we were left alone when we needed our space, gave us hugs, and shed tears with us. The phone rang often, and I found myself doing most of the talking when the other end of the phone was uncomfortably silent as people struggled to find the right words to say. Even in my numbness, I was able to understand the dilemma of "I'm sorry" doesn't seem to be enough when someone has just lost a four year-old little girl.

A few days after the memorial service, everyone went home. Less sympathy cards arrived in the mail until there were none. The phone stopped ringing. Our daughter's preschool arranged a weekly meal donation and then my work did the same, which was a huge help... but eventually those stopped coming too. We were left alone to figure out how to pick up the pieces of our shattered hearts and shattered lives. We went to counseling and support groups. But we were forced to accept the fact that life was going to keep moving forward without our precious girl in it. It was devastating.

That devastation led me to a self-imposed isolation from a world I could no longer stand to be a part of. I didn't want to talk to people who couldn't understand my pain because I didn't want to have to explain myself. The sound of laughter or gossip produced outright anger in me. The everyday acts of going to work, chores, grocery shopping, or even something as simple as showering were agonizingly painful and almost impossible. I wanted nothing to do with any of it. I found myself not answering the phone and not returning messages. I turned down



*Continued on page 4*

## Our Children Remembered

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

### Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
<b>Brian Burke</b> - Son of Rich and Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
<b>Christopher Cole</b> - Son of Donald Cole; Brother of Lauren Cole	Oct 10	Sep 10
<b>David DeLong</b> - Son of Gene DeLong & The late Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong; Grandson of the late David Kaufman	Oct 23	Dec 7
<b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James	Aug 7	Oct 21
<b>Nykolas LaRosa</b> - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
<b>Andrea Luecke</b> - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
<b>Joseph McDonald</b> - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
<b>Steven Poliquin</b> - Son of Chris and Eva Poliquin; Grandson of Louise Mazza	Oct 8	Feb 23
<b>Deanna Renner</b> - Daughter of Ginger Renner & The late Merle Renner	Oct 11	Oct 22
<b>Scott Rothrock</b> - Son of Larry and Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
<b>Kevin Stewart</b> - Son of Joanne Stewart; Brother of Keith Stewart & The Late Constance Stewart	Oct 6	Jun 15
<b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
<b>Gilbert Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	Oct 22
<b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael and Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22



## Love Gifts



Love Gifts 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. Gifts are tax deductible.

Contributor	Loved One
♥ Gene & Jamie DeLong	<i>Dawn &amp; David DeLong</i> <i>We lovingly remember Dawn &amp; David on the the day God clded you home (10/4) and the day David was brought into the world (10/23).</i>

## Donations & Contributions

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

### IF YOU SEE GHOSTS YOU'RE CRAZY!

Don't you believe it. A great many people who have lost loved ones see or hear them in the days and weeks after the death. I can't explain it, but I know very normal people who have seen a loved one, heard his or her voice. Some say it's the mind playing tricks on us. Others say it is a gift meant to comfort us. Still others say this experience surprised them but did not come as a total shock. Whatever the case. I have known too many sane, normal people who have had such experiences. Don't confuse the natural working of a normal mind with the foolish stories of Edgar Alen Poe.

By Reverend Dr. Marge Swacker, Heartland Hospice Chaplain, St. Louis

*Continued from page 2*

invitations to get together with friends who weren't sure how to help me.

I managed to make sure that I fed my surviving kids and took them to school and practices, but I was no longer the mom they were used to. They stopped wanting to talk to me about how they felt because they knew it would make me even sadder, and they were frightened that not only did they lose their sister, but there was a potential that their mom was losing her ability to take care of them.

Over that first year or so, the suffocating pain began to lessen, though not by as much as I would have hoped. I got better at doing those everyday tasks that didn't seem so impossible anymore. I began to adjust to the "new normal" any grieving person must accept.

Then the isolation of grief began to change. While I started answering the phone and accepting some of those invitations, I felt isolated in the sense that I continued to think of my daughter and experience the pain constantly, but very few people talked about my grief or even mentioned her name any more. I felt completely alone.

Support groups and counseling helped. So did reaching out to other parents who had lost children, and I preferred their company over others. I found myself part of the secret society of grieving parents who mostly keep their grief to themselves and only share it with those who understand because they are faced with the same loss and pain. I found that sharing my feelings with these people helped me immensely.

Now that more time has passed, I am learning how to balance becoming fully reinvested in life while respecting my continuing needs for grief support. I still look forward to support groups and talking with other bereaved people, but I also appreciate that when I allow myself to enjoy and appreciate everyday life, joy will come even without my daughter being physically here.

Despite my continued longing for her to be at my side and the ability to experience the wonder of watching her grow, I know that she will always be with me in spirit. She is forever in my heart, my memories, and my thoughts. And these days, I don't mind sharing that with anyone who cares to get to know me.

*Maria Kubitz, In Memory of my daughter, Margareta  
TCF, Contra Costa County, CA*

## *Reflections on the First Year*

*Although all of my dreams can not come true,  
some of them can, and will.*

*Although I can not have the future that I planned to  
have, I can still have a future.*

*There was no gift in Ryan's death, but there was a gift  
in his life.*

*I must believe that darkness can not last forever,  
and learn to release the darkness in the hope of new  
dreams.*

*I have learned that I can not control everything  
that happens to me, but I do have a choice at what I  
do with what has happened.*

*I may forget what his voice sounded like, or what his  
cologne smelled like. But I will never forget what he  
"loved" like. Although Ryan has died, the love that I  
share with him can never be destroyed.*

*It is safe within me, I only have to call it up whenever  
I need it. It fills me with love and joy.*

*Although my family's circle of life has been broken  
by death, it will be mended by love.*

*I will always love and miss Ryan, but I know that he  
is waiting for me, somewhere very near.*

*All that we were to each other, that we are still.*

*Ryan's Mom, Marsha Guilliams  
St. Louis Chapter TCF*

**"Start by doing what's necessary,  
Then what's possible,  
And suddenly you are doing the impossible"**

**St. Francis**

## Love In Every Tear

*Precious, tiny, sweet little one  
You will always be to me  
So perfect, pure, and innocent  
Just as you were meant to be*

*We dreamed of you and of your life  
And all that it would be  
We waited and longed for you to come  
And join our family*

*We never had the chance to play  
To laugh, to rock, to wiggle  
We long to hold you, touch you now  
And listen to you giggle*

*I'll always be your mother  
He'll always be your dad  
You will always be our child  
The child that we had*

*But now you're gone, but yet you're here  
We'll sense you everywhere  
You are our sorrow and our joy  
There's love in every tear*

*Just know our love goes deep and strong  
We'll forget you never...  
The child we had, but never had -  
And yet will have forever.*

*Author Unknown*

**In this world there are  
many kinds of longing,  
But no longing to match  
the longing for one's child**

*Ki No Tourayuki*

## The Grief of a Parent who has Lost an Infant

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should that child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to the parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

1. Shame and guilt. Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.
2. No memories. Parents may only have "souvenirs of an occasion" (birth certificate, ID bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.
3. Loneliness in grief. It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is a newborn they may give the impression that you are grieving unnecessarily over a non-person. They hope that you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."
4. Neglected father. Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby too.
5. Mothers vs. fathers. Since the mother has bonded with her child all during pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

*Claire McGauhey & Sue Shelley TCF, St. Louis, MO*



## Trick or Treat

The night is dim  
And the pumpkins grin  
At children on the porch.

The doorbell rings  
"Trick or treat" they sing.  
My heart burns like a torch.

The Dracula's face  
And a princess in lace  
Are peering in at me.

How I'd love to ask  
May I lift your mask?"  
And hiding, there you'd be!

You'd get such a kick  
From that silly trick  
But disguised you must stay.

In the wind that blows  
My heart still know  
You're playing October charades.



*Kathi Slief TCF/Tulsa, OK*

## The Mask



People say, "oh my, oh my. It's amazing  
how you're getting by. I don't think that I  
could be so strong if such a thing happened to me."  
But how come such persons are never around when I  
remove the face of a clown, and there for all the world  
to see is a person destroyed by tragedy.

So I look at these people and give a grin, hiding the  
sick feeling within. And hope that I will find a way to  
get through another day.

*Laraine Rodriquez  
TCF, Gainesville, GA*

## Sound Familiar?

I seem to be falling apart. My attention span can  
be measured in seconds, my patience in minutes,  
and I cry at the drop of a hat. I forget things  
constantly. The morning toast burns daily. I forget  
to sign my *checks*. Half of everything in the house  
is misplaced. Anxiety and restlessness are my  
constant companions. Rainy days seem extra  
dreary. Sunny days seem an outrage. Other  
people's pain and frustration seem insignificant.  
Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my  
world. I am normal, I am told. I am a newly  
grieving person.

*Eloise Cold  
TCF Phoenix, AZ*

## ***Why is My Grief Different in the Second Year?***

*Why is my grief different in the second year?  
Why do I feel so much more empty in the second year?  
Why do I cry more, again, in the second year?  
Is it because I am more alone and the world has moved on?  
Has the world forgotten that you ever lived?  
Is it because I realize "with my heart" that you are not coming back?  
That forever is a long time?  
Is it because all of the "firsts" are over and I must move on?  
Why is my grief different in the second year?  
Because, my child, you are still gone.*

*Eleanor Oberle, TCF - in memory of her son, Dan Oberle*

# Sibling Page

## I Often Wonder ?

I often wonder how life would be,  
if you were still down here with me.

I often wonder if you'd make them proud,  
would you be quiet or would you be loud?

I often wonder if you'd be class clown,  
bring someone up if they were down.

? I often wonder if you'd be bright,  
be the type who is always right.

I often wonder if you'd be like Dad,  
and be the rock for those who're sad.

I often wonder if you'd be like Mom,  
and the one to keep us calm.

I often wonder about you brother,  
and how us five could use another.

I often wonder how life would be,  
if you were still down here with me.

? I often wonder if we would bond,  
would you be like me and blond?

I often wonder if we'll meet one day,  
about the words we'll choose to say.

I often wonder, I must confess,  
if us not meeting hurts more or less?

I often wonder if when we cry,  
is that just how we must say goodbye?

I often wonder, I just can't resist,  
to think about the good times that you have missed.

I often wonder late at night,  
if on a cloudy day, you're a ray of light.

I often wonder how life would be,  
if you were still down here with me....

Christian

"I Often Wonder."

Family Friend Poems, Mar 2011

<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/i-often-wonder-how-life-would-be>

## My First Five Years As An Only Child

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged thirty years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult; learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career.

In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass.

In these past five years have been forced to grow up too fast. I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I have been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.

*Kristin Steiner, TCF Staten Island*

Did you know that The Compassionate Friends hosts a chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings?

To join go to [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on the "Find Support" menu. There you will find options for moderated chatrooms and private facebook pages and information on how to join.



## The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

**W**e 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** - 215-703-8431

**GRASP** (grief recovery after substance passing)

**TCF Pocono** - 570 - 350 - 6695

(484) 788-9440

### 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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Phone

Email Address

Lehigh Valley Chapter Mailing Address

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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