



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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December

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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 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

- Face masks are required for unvaccinated, optional for fully vaccinated.
- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

Next Meeting Dec. 11

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

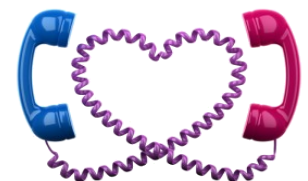
To Our New Members

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 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

- by mail:
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TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting - Sunday, Dec. 10 We encourage everyone to participate in this very special event, when bereaved families join together from around the world and light candles for 1 hour at 7:00 p.m. local time in memory of all children gone too soon.

To Participate you may observe the event :

- **At home with family**
- **Attend a local gathering** - Our chapter will not be holding a wwel event but other nearby chapters may. You can visit TCF National's website at www.compassionatefriends.org for a list of events. The link for the worldwide candle lighting can be found on the bottom of any page under the Menu heading
- **Join The Compassionate Friends Virtual Candle Lighting.** Preregistration required. To join the virtual event visit TCF National website at www.compassionatefriends.org, scroll to the bottom of any page click on the link for the Worldwide Candle Lighting then click on Virtual Worldwide Candle Lighting. The next page that appears will allow you to choose the candle lighting for your time zone. You then will be taken to Zoom registration for your selected candle lighting. After you register you will receive details for the event via email.

Candles in the Night

Candles flame in darkness,
flicker, steadily glow,
bringing light from shadows
and help to soothe us so.

Our children, brothers, sisters,
gave our lives true light;
we use the candles' beacons
to connect us in the night.

As we lit the candles,
our wish and our request
was that they'd see our signals
and know our love's expressed.

As their lights join our lights,
our worlds touch and flame . . .
Now with all the candles burning,
we will softly say their names



Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
adapted from a poem in *Stars in the Deepest Night - After the Death of a Child*

Our Children Remembered

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

Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
Michael Conelias - Son of Trent and Joanne Conelias	Dec 10	Aug 1
Christopher Crouthamel, Jr - Son of Carla Monteverde; Brother of Leah, Stephen & Carli	Aug 10	Dec 28
David DeLong - Son of Gene DeLong & The late Dawn DeLong; Brother of Jamie DeLong	Oct 23	Dec 7
Connor Dugan - Son of George and Holly Dugan	Jul 17	Dec 24
Heather Hawn - Daughter of Mike and Cathi Tirrell; Sister of Holli & Chad	Feb 25	Dec 25
Richard "Rich" Hollabaugh -Son of Linda Hollabaugh & the late Wayne Hollabaugh	Dec 20	Apr 10
Audrey King Koch - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
Joseph McDonald - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
Cody Myers - Son of David and Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Lauren Schneck - Daughter of James and Lisa Schneck	Aug 10	Dec 2
Emma Werner - Daughter of Samantha Behler; Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III	Dec 15	Nov 1



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 and Jamie Delong	David Delong <i>We lovingly remember David. Dad and Jamie</i>
♥ Mark and Kathleen Kilker	♥ Ryan Dugan Son of James and Regina Dugan, brother of Patrick and Matthew, grandson of Joanne Dye
♥ David and Denise Myers	♥ Cody David Alexander Myers <i>We were happy to have you in our lives</i>

Donations & Contributions

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ <i>Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA</i>
<i>For our meeting space</i> ★ <i>Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions</i>
<i>In Memory of David Todd Smith</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ <i>Aetna Payroll Contributors</i> ★ <i>United Way Payroll Contributors</i> ★ <i>The Matt Kush Foundation</i>
<i>In Memory of Matt Kush</i> |
|---|--|

The Empty Chair

The table is set, and ready with food to delight the eye. Everyone is waiting, with anticipation high. But one place is empty, void of a loved one dear. And as we pause to remember, we wipe away the tear.

Your chair may be empty, and your presence no longer there. But your memory is with us, as we gather around this fare.

Someone recalls something you once said, and the memories start to flow And in this magic moment, your spirit upon us glows

Gone but never forgotten, as with us you'll always be. And if I look close, your presence, in the empty chair I see.

Sheila Simmons, Dallas, GA

Remembering your Child(ren) in Special Ways during the Holiday Season

As everyone surely knows (but may be trying to forget), the holidays are approaching. If this is your first holiday season since the death of your child, you may wish you could just skip the whole thing. But even if we choose not to celebrate at all, the rest of the world is celebrating, and we would literally have to stay in our houses with the shades drawn, the TV and radio off, and conceal the newspaper in order to ignore it.

Most bereaved parents will say that the anticipation of the day is actually worse than the day itself. This is probably true, but we still have to deal with the "season" - parties, shopping for gifts, family gatherings, people wishing us "good cheer", etc. Then, too, if we have other small children we feel obligated not to spoil it for them.

So, how do we handle the holidays? The following are some suggestions that have helped other parents grieving for a special child at this special time of year:

Above all, don't force yourself to do anything you feel you can't handle. Keep your plans simple and flexible. Being with supportive relatives and friends can be comforting, but don't feel obligated to go to every party, every family gathering, or stay longer than you are comfortable.

Shopping for gifts can be especially difficult, with the stores decorated, jolly Santas everywhere and holiday music playing. You might even feel resentful if you need to buy gifts for other people's young children. This does not indicate that you are a "mean" person or a "Scrooge". You're just grieving, and that's normal. Some bereaved parents shop exclusively from catalogs and avoid the stores altogether. This is a fine solution if you don't have energy and presence of mind to shop early. Some people make a list ahead of time so they can shop faster, or

have someone else shop for them. Or shop with another bereaved parent - you won't feel crazy, and you will be able to express your feelings freely and openly. Also, take advantage of gift wrapping services or pay a teenage friend to do it for you.

Remember and include your special child in whatever way(s) you want to and feel appropriate. This is, of course painful, and family and friends may think you are "dragging this thing out" unnecessarily. Remind them gently that it is normal and necessary to grieve, and that you want to include your children during the holidays.

- * Burn a candle in your home during the holidays in memory of your child.
- * Buy a special ornament for your child for your tree.
- * Decorate your child's grave.
- * Donate a toy you would have bought your child to a needy child or a child who is hospitalized during the holiday.
- * Hang a stocking for your child along with the others and "stuff it with money. Ask friends and relatives to do the same. Then donate that money in your child's name to a worthy cause.
- * Don't be afraid to change your routine totally, especially if you have no surviving children. Take a trip if you want to. What counts right now is what's best for you - no one but you knows what that is.

Finally, these days, like all the rest, will pass and become just a memory. Hang in there! The friendship and understanding of other bereaved parents is very helpful at this time - keep in touch! Wishing you peace this holiday season.

Linda Moffat
TCF St. Louis, MO



*Let this Christmas be gentle for you,
Give yourself the "gift of peace".
Let the magic spin your private cocoon
With a hope that will never cease.
Remember your children tenderly;*

*Let the light of their love shine through.
For in the wonder and magic of
Christmas time,
They are sending their love to you.
Sweet Peace, Sweet Hope, Sweet Love*

Dana Gensler, TCF South Central K Y

Handling the Holidays

I have pondered over what I could write for you to make your Holidays easier, knowing that the very word "Holiday" is painful for you.

I find myself doing a lot of wishing ...like "I wish our children were alive." (If only I could deliver that one.)

I have other wishes though that maybe can come true.

I wish ...

... For our children to be with us in spirit, and that we may feel the love they bring .

... For relatives to be more understanding, and for us to remember when we didn't understand .

... For us to see the small signs of hope even on the most desolate of days - for they are surely there .

... For Christmas and Hanukkah not to be as bad as we fear, and that it will never be this bad again .

... That we will not deny ourselves the care we need, even if that means being a little selfish .

... For us to know we are not alone, Our Compassionate Friends are there - reach out.

The road of grief is rarely rougher or more uphill than at the time of the holidays, but once traveled, that stretch of road is behind us.

Though it will surely run uphill again before it smooths for length, it will not be so very steep, or quite so long again.

By Laura House, Unknown Chapter

Winter

When winter comes into our lives

With its uncertain sound,

To strip us of our warmth and joy,

Our petals on the ground,

We may be tempted to give up;

To fold beneath life's storm.

We may be tempted to forsake

The hope which keeps us warm.

But, we must learn to stand up tall;

To always face the sun,

And patiently await the day

When winter's work is done.

For winter winds will cease to howl;

The snows will melt away.

Then we shall see the beauty of

Another summer's day.

And we will have renewed our strength

When summer's wind first blows,

For God will whisper once again

The promise of a rose.

*Glenda Fulton Davis, Bereavement Magazine
Nov/ Dec 1987*

Chanukah

Chanukah is here.

I see the candles glow,
red, pink and blue.

But you're not here to see their pretty shadows.

I shop for gifts.

And this year, again, once more,

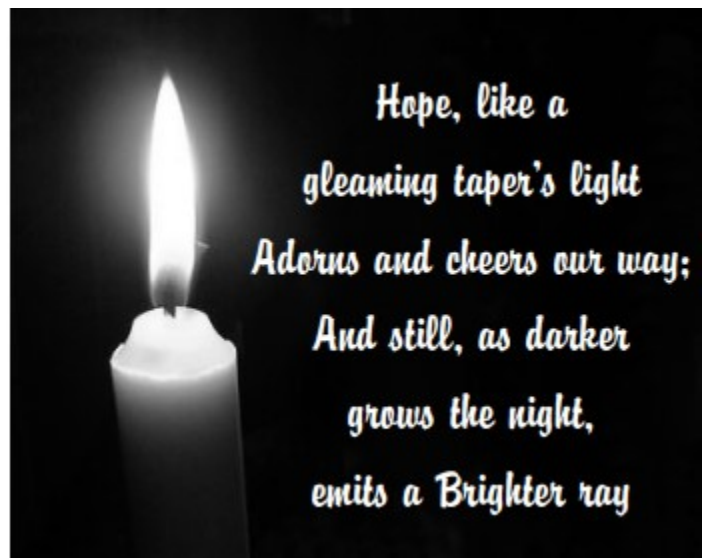
I won't be in a quandary of what to buy.

I give you my love,

My precious son, for that is eternal.

And once again it will have to do.

By Ginette Kravet TCF Central Jersey



A Letter to my Family and Friends

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season. It will be our first Christmas without our child and I have all I can do coping with the "spirit" of the holiday on the radio, TV, in the newspapers and stores. We do not feel joyous and trying to pretend this Christmas is going to be like the last will be impossible because we are missing one.

Our family traditions will be too painful for us to continue this year. Please understand this and maybe some Christmas in the future we will have these traditions again.

Please allow me to talk about my child, if I feel a need. Don't be uncomfortable with my tears. My heart is breaking and the tears are a way of letting out my sadness.

I plan to do something special in memory of my child. Please recognize my need to do this in order to keep our memories alive. My fear is not that I'll forget, but that you will.

Please don't criticize me if I do something that you don't think is normal I'm a different person now and it may take a long time before this different person reaches an acceptance of my child's death.

As I survive the stages of grief, I will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season.

Love,

A bereaved parent

Madison, Wisconsin TCF

To ourselves we can grant the gift of acceptance by realizing that our grief is a necessary healing process. To our families we can extend the gift of empathy by remembering that they, too, hurt. To our missing children we can bestow the gift of homage by determining to work through grief so that we may live life to the fullest.

Candy McLaughlin, TCF Minneapolis, MN

Sibling Page

To All Siblings...

Be guided by the reality that there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holidays after your sibling died. Do what you need to do to get yourself through the holidays. We grieve differently than our parents do. Yes, we need to respect their grief, but we need to remember ours. Our siblings would want us to laugh and sing along with the Christmas carols, but we just may not be ready yet. Guilt? Oh, yes, we will feel that this holiday season. But we may also celebrate their lives in our own special way.

Whatever you choose to do, do what's good for you. Everyone is at a different stage in their grief. The holidays make the reality of loss even harder. I hope this holiday season you can find peace and love in memories. Please know you are not alone.

Vera, Sara's sister, TCF, Kansas City, MO

I Always Sleep Late on Christmas

*Somehow, I always sleep late on Christmas.
Strange, that's not how it used to be.
Each year in anticipation of surprises left for me
by the tree,
I jumped from my bed at the crack of dawn.
Now I always sleep late on Christmas.
It just doesn't seem so important anymore
to be the one whose feet are first to hit the floor,
as it was when I would stand over my brother's
bed and-say,
"Wake up! You can't sleep late. It's Christmas!"
There is no one now to keep
me from missing Christmas dawn because of too
much sleep.
That time on that day is now lonely in a way,
so I always sleep late on Christmas Day.*

Melanie Smith, TCF, Tuscaloosa, AL

The Elephant In The Room

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting,
so it is hard to get around it.
Yet, we squeeze by with,
"how are you" and "I'm fine..."
and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
we talk about everything else
except the elephant in the room.
We all know it's there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk.
It is constantly on our minds.
For you see, it is a very big elephant.
But we do not talk about
the elephant in the room.
Oh, please, somebody say my child's name
Oh, please, say it again
Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about their death,
perhaps we can talk about their life.
Can I say their name...
and not have you look away?
For if I cannot,
you are leaving me alone...
In a room...
with an elephant.
~Author Unknown

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 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

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 - 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

Lehigh Valley Chapter Mailing Address

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BETHLEHEM, PA 18020

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

Address

Phone

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