



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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May

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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

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 May 8

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

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When Mother's Day Feels Empty

There are no words to completely describe what a mother feels when her child has died. she feels lost, abandoned, afraid, lonely, forgotten, and most of all, empty. The emptiness is like none other because it is an emptiness of the heart. when a child dies, part of a mother's heart also dies.

Mother's Day is a traditional holiday that has grown bigger and bigger throughout the years. we are bombarded with advertisements to take mothers out for a special dinner or buy Mother's Day flowers. For more than a month before Mother's Day, reminders are placed everywhere. it is impossible to pick up a newspaper, listen to the radio, or turn on the television without some kind of reminder of Mother's Day. There are Mother's Day banquets, Mother's Day baby dedications at church, and special family gatherings to honor mothers. All of this is wonderful except for the mother that is grieving the loss of her child especially if it was her only child, or a child lost before being born. For the grieving mother, every reminder of Mother's Day may be like another wound to the heart. With each reminder, and the emptiness feels darker and colder than she ever imagined possible.

What is a grieving mother to do when there are so many reminders of the precious child she has lost? Mother's Day is the only holiday that specifically uses the word mother, so there is no real way of avoiding this day. A grieving mother can, however, prepare for Mother's Day well in advance so that she knows how to avoid placing additional pain in her life. Remember that Mother's Day is not a holiday that has to be celebrated. If a grieving mother does not want to attend a banquet, or watch baby dedications at church, or see special family gatherings at restaurants, then she has the right to choose not to participate in these events without feeling guilty. Many mothers choose to stay home and do nothing special at all on Mother's Day, and that is fine. Grief follows no rules and there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Explain to others that this day is painful. Giving yourself permission to grieve in your own way is very healing and helpful, especially during such a difficult day as Mother's Day.

Do what feels right for you. Maybe that means taking a mini trip away where nobody knows you. Maybe it is staying at home. Perhaps a walk in the woods or a walk along the sandy beach would help you during this empty time. Journal your thoughts. Release a balloon. Or, maybe you want to avoid Mother's Day altogether. You know what feels best for your heart, and giving yourself permission to do what is right for you can be the most healing thing of all. Lastly, remind yourself often that you will not always feel this empty. With each passing day

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.
Patricia Arey - Daughter of Elizabeth & the late William Arey; Sister of Elizabeth Ann, Barbara, Rose Marie & Elaine	Apr 18	May 8
Gabriel Benner - Son of Baily Benner	May 4	Feb 9
Jennifer Grider - Daughter of Carl and Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
David Heard - Son of Susan Heard; Brother of Daisy Heard	May 20	Feb 10
Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark and Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget and Mark Kilker	May 6	Jul 23
David Kunsman - Son of Charles and Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr	May 2	Jul 15
Cody Myers - Son of David and Denise Myers; Brother of Travis, Crystal and Benjamin Myers	Dec 12	May 15
Eric Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Feb 15	May 20
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Jonelle Sisonick - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick	May 22	Aug 3
Shane Uttard - Son of Brenda Deubler	Jan 15	May 13
Joseph Visnosky, Jr. - Brother of Grace Ashner	May 27	May 4
Liam Young - Son of Thomas and Gabrielle Young; Brother of Nathan & Nora	May 13	Nov 14



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
♥ Betty Schuler	Dean Lynn Schuler <i>Love you and miss you</i>
♥ Elizabeth Arey	Patricia Arey <i>Gone too soon - Forever in my heart , Mother</i>

Donations & Contributions

★ **Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA**
For our meeting space

★ **Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions**
In Memory of David Todd Smith

★ **Aetna Payroll Contributors**

★ **United Way Payroll Contributors**

★ **The Matt Kush Foundation**
In Memory of Matt Kush



Look for us on the Web



- ♥ Visit our web page at www.lehighvalleytcf.org for group information, past and present newsletters & helpful links
- ♥ Like and Follow our facebook page: www.facebook.com/TCFLehighValley for meeting reminders, cancelations, announcements, meaningful posts .
- ♥ Find us on Pinterest under the keyword **The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter**

Continued from page 2

new hope will enter your empty heart until one day you will wake up to realize that the empty hole is beginning to fill with some joy. Mother's Day is only one day. With a little bit of preparation you can make it through, and you will have walked one more step in your journey of healing!

Clara Hinton

Clara Hinton is a Site Founder, Author, Speaker & Workshop Leader

Visit her site www.silentgrief.com for articles, resources, message boards, and additional support for healing through loss.

A Mother's Love

A mother's love for her child may begin with the very dream of becoming a mother... A mother's love for her child may begin with the thought of maybe expecting the news... A mother's love for her child may begin with the verification of her expectations... A mother's love for her child may begin with the affirmation that the child lives within her... A mother's love for her child may begin with her first sight of the new life that she has delivered into the world... A mother's love for her child may begin... But it may never end... Not even death can steal away a mother's love for her child. A mother's love for her child knows no end!

Diana M. Rohrbaugh, TCF Anne Arundel County, M D



Bereaved Mothers Day - the first Sunday in May

The Fallen

Fragile is a single life the brave so freely give.
Bound for immortality, their souls will surely live.
Death, don't be proud for what you took, they freely gave away.
Their quest for freedom far outweighed the fear that you convey.

They joined the ranks of warriors, staying vigil day and night.
They often skipped a meal or two, but they never missed a fight.
God bless the men and women whose fighting days are done.
Say a special prayer at night for each and every one.

Rest assured that you will find throughout the coming years
These fallen warriors will return in the hearts of all their peers!
If we forget their sacrifice, their deaths will be in vain.
Let's stand beside their loved ones as we sing their last refrain:

You've come upon our heaven's gate
You surely won't have long to wait.
The saints will take good care of you,
But there is still a lot to do.

You've joined the ranks of everyone
Who fought so freedom could be won.
Although your job on earth is done,
Your work in heaven's just begun.

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Reflections of a Mother Denied

On this my first Mother's Day, I ask myself, "Do you have a right to celebrate Mother's Day? Have I truly been a mother this past year?" The answer is yes.

Each day I have cared for my child as every mother does, except differently. In every way possible, I have mothered him. I have mothered him with every tear shed; through the agony of longing to hold him. I have rocked him in my heart if not in my arms. I have kissed his little cheeks in my mind if not with my lips. I've smelled his sweetness with my hopes if not with my nose. I have felt his softness with my memory if not with my hands. And I have tickled him with my wishes if not with my fingers.

Am I a mother? I truly am. My physical mothering has been limited to lovingly tending his grave, but I am a mother just the same.

*Michelle M. Parrish
TCF Columbia Chapter, Baltimore, MD*

Adventures

When I was a little girl, my mom would take my family on "adventures." Sometimes they were fascinating and wonderful, and other times they were scary and difficult. As I grew up, I learned that my mother's adventures actually meant that we were lost and were finding our way home as best we could.

Grief is much the same. It is a scary and difficult journey in life. We all must find our way home the best way that we can. My hope and thoughts travel with you on your adventure. And if we should meet out there, you will find a friend to help you.



*Cheryl Brown,
TCF, Miami, FL*

Of Parent and Child

Between Alexander and me was an unspoken arrangement. My job was to teach the lessons of the world, his was to grow and learn. In the two and a half years that we were together, we utilized this system to the fullest.

From my accumulated wisdom and experience, Alexander was taught all that a growing child needed to know. Together we studied the mysteries of the universe, the softness of kitten fur and how rain makes mud. He learned the social graces, table manners, and bathroom etiquette.

He was taught care and consideration for himself, his sibling, and other human beings. Under my gentle tutelage, Alexander learned of love and life.

As his mother, I took the responsibility for protecting him from all hurt and harm. It was my job to go before, to pave the way for the child that follows. But somewhere in the stillness of a February night, Alexander and I reversed roles. He died quietly in his sleep, making his journey to the other side alone, without me.

I was left as the child—he as the parent. I am the child who must struggle, stumble, and falter, unsure of my way. Alex is the parent, possessing spiritual completeness for which I am still searching. He has jumped ahead and now he turns to hold out his tiny hand to me. "Come, Mother, do not be afraid. The path ahead has been paved by me and I will not let you fall." Through Alexander's gentle tutelage, I have learned of love and life...and death.

Joanetta Hendel, TCF, Naples, FL

Once I wanted only total happiness, Now I will settle for a little less pain

Ashleigh Brilliant

My Perennial Love

Every summer my son gives me flowers. He planted them 17 years ago ... the summer before he died. I remember the day he planted them. Not the exact date, but standing there talking to him as he poked holes in the ground and carefully placed each one. I remember thanking him and thinking how very sweet of him to do that for me.

Terry died the following February. After months of crying and grieving, summer came and with it his flowers bloomed! Of course it made me miss him even more, but how I loved seeing them and knowing that he had put them there the year before. I know nothing about flowers so I was astounded when my mother told me that what he had planted was an annual and not a perennial and that they should not have come back.

A few weeks ago, our neighbor who moved in last summer, commented on my impatiens. She said she was surprised to see them come back from last year. I told her that they have been coming back every year now for 16 years. Just saying it aloud made me realize how extraordinary that really is! There is something else I have come to realize. My love for my son did not end when he died. My love for him is indefinite; it is enduring.

It is perennial.

*Maureen Harman,
TCF Tidewater Chapter, VA*

I'll Hold You in My Heart Until I Hold You in Heaven

When a child dies, a parent is still tied to that child. Souls tied together across universes. It doesn't matter the age when they passed. It doesn't matter how long ago it happened. It doesn't matter - none of it. Their souls are forever tied. That's the love of a parent. That's the love that is more powerful than death. That's the heart that breaks and keeps breaking until their arms are filled again. It knows no discrimination based off of age, health, or time, it just is, and it always will be. Their souls are forever tied, and there's nothing that can break them. That's the beauty of unconditional love.

ScribblesandCrumbs.com

Catching Butterflies

It often hurts to come upon
reminders of my son.
Tho' often since I lost him
I would search around for one



Which always brought on sadness
And the tears that I would shed
Were caused by names or faces,
All things that I would dread.



But then one day I came upon
A man who'd lost his son.
I found that things I ran from,
He wouldn't even shun.

But rather he would treasure
And I said I wondered why
He told me that he called them
"Catching Butterflies"



This view of his intrigued me;
I wanted to hear more
And learned that he took all of them
And carefully would store



All of the reminders
That I chose to push away
He would tuck deep down inside
His heart each and every day.

Now a name or likeness
When catching me off guard
Does not upset me as it did
And I don't find it hard.



For now instead I see these times
As opportunities
To see my son awakened
In these new fresh memories

*Dottie Williams
TCF Pittsburgh PA*



Sibling Page

Life goes on

"Life goes on" - I have often heard this sentence, said perhaps to console me, or perhaps as a way to put an end to a conversation about loss and death. Of course, life goes on, no matter how shattered our lives are by the loss of someone we love so dearly. Life doesn't ask whether we want to go along. We want the world to stop turning because of our loss. Days turn into nights, again and again, and this is how we arrived at this day. Suddenly another month, another year has gone by, although we all probably asked ourselves how we would be able to go on living. It just happens. We do not die because of the pain. We keep on living and I still wonder how this can be.

I do not want life to go on, but to stop it right here, or better yet, to turn back to the day when I lost my sister and baby niece. I do not want the changes life brings. Each change seems to increase the distance between the life I knew with them and the life I live today. I cannot ask my sister's opinion about the new things that happen. I cannot share them with her, tell her about them, laugh or cry with her about them. Changes make me aware that in fact life does go on, without her. My birthdays make me sad because they change the difference in age — my sister was always four years older than I was, and now we are down to three years. Sometimes I feel guilty that I live on. I breathe, smell, touch, feel, see and experience life, while my sister and her daughter were ripped away from it. My sister and I never talked about death or losing each other, but if we had, I am sure that we both would have said that we could not imagine life without one another. If it had been me, my sister would have been forced to do exactly the same: go on living despite the agony, just because there is no choice.

Before I lost them, I trusted life to be good. I believed in fairness; if we are good, life will spare us tragedies, and besides, these tragedies only happen to other people, those I do not know, those I read about in the papers, distant, easy to forget about. I lost this sense of security and trust in life.

I now find that living takes courage.

Life becomes meaningful through love and friendship, but loving someone is what makes us vulnerable. Daring to invite love into our lives means to increase our vulnerability to the threats that seem to be around every corner. Instead of asking "why us?" I often find myself asking "why not us?" Tragedy hits good and bad people for no reason. It seems the world is just random and unpredictable. Just because I am a good person and I already lost so much, does not mean that I will be spared from more pain.

Life goes on, and because it does, with all the good and bad things that happen to us, it scares me to live and particularly, to love. What if more happens? The fear is paralyzing. I pray to God, to my sister and my niece to protect us, although I know they don't have the power to prevent other bad things from happening. What then can I ask them for? Courage, I guess. Courage to let life go on, to give myself a chance that new and good things happen to me that will add joy to my life.

Britta Nielsen,

TCF Manhattan, NY 2004

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

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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