



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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

Volume 37 Issue 6

Copyright © 2023 The Compassionate Friends, Inc

**June**

TCF, Lehigh Valley  
Chapter 1562

Phone  
484-891-0823

Email:  
tcflehighvalley@gmail.com

Website  
www.lehighvalleytcf.org

Facebook Page  
facebook.comTCFlehighvalley

Pinterest  
The Compassionate Friends,  
Lehigh Valley Chapter

Steering Committee  
Brian & Kathleen Collins,  
Dean & Donna Davidson,  
Gene Delong, George Geiger,  
Brenda Solderitch

Newsletter Editor/  
Database & Website  
Manager  
Kathleen Collins  
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com  
484-891-0823

Treasurer  
Brenda Solderitch

TCF National  
Headquarters  
877- 969-0010 (toll-free)  
www.compassionatefriends.  
org

**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 June 12**

**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](https://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

- by mail:  
The Compassionate Friends, LV  
C/O Kathleen Collins,  
2971 Pheasant Dr.,  
Northampton, PA 18067
- by phone:  
484-891-0823;
- by email:  
TCFNewsEditor@gmail.com

### Inside this issue:

Article - The Loss of a Child	2 & 4
Love Gifts	3
Our Children Remembered	3
Poem - Little Boy Blue	4
Article - Of Slippers, Trout and things that fit	5
Articles - Its June; Strength	6
<u>Sibling Page</u>	7
Article - Nature Helps	
Love Gift Form	8

## The Loss of a Child

The grief of parents following the death of a child is one of the most profound forms of bereavement there is.

### What Is It Like to Lose a Child?

Every bereavement is unique. Even when you are two parents grieving for the same child, you will grieve differently and at a different pace. At a time when you most need each other for support and understanding, your preoccupation with your own loss may make it difficult for you to help your partner. Or you may both take on the role of protector and try to "be strong" for the other, concealing your own pain for fear of adding to the other's distress. This situation is impossible to sustain and can lead to misunderstanding, even a breakdown in communication. You may find yourself saying, "He doesn't seem to feel anything", or "I can't seem to get through to her any more".

In the early months you may feel overwhelmed, helpless, disoriented, frightened and exhausted. It is not uncommon to imagine that you see or hear the child you have lost, and while this can be comforting at the time it can also seem to confirm your fear that you are going mad. You may, perhaps, wish for death because life no longer seems worth living or in the hope that you will be reunited with your child. Many partnerships suffer after such a loss. Far from bringing parents together, a child's death can threaten the stability of even the best relationships.

### The View from Outside

Family and friends may urge you to pull yourself together or they may avoid contact because they too feel helpless and afraid of inadvertently causing further hurt. They may even feel threatened - if your child can die, they worry that so too can theirs.

It is at this point that many bereaved parents, feeling abandoned, seek outside help. But to seek help is also to have to acknowledge the reality of the loss, which some people understandably try to resist, often for several months. You may function on "auto pilot" by going through the motions of a safe and familiar routine until you feel able to experience the full anguish of your grief. Sometimes it is not until the first year has passed that bereaved parents really begin the task of grieving, although some will still try to avoid directly facing up to their loss. After the second anniversary of the death, however (or the second missed birthday, Christmas, Mother's or Father's Day), your grief may erupt violently because avoidance and denial are no longer possible. Unfortunately, by this time others may expect you to have recovered from your loss and so the help you need may not be immediately available.

But the loss of a child is lifelong. You are likely to be reminded of the child you have lost when you see children of a similar age or appearance and, as you watch other children growing up, you will be reminded of what your own child would have been like and what you are missing. In time you may find some new purpose in living, but you do not ever forget the child you have lost. That child is, and will remain, part of you

### Why Parents' Grief Is Different

When your child dies, you feel as if you have failed in your role as

*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>John Ashner, Jr.</b> - Son of John & Grace Ashner	Jun 22	Nov 8
<b>Denise Deiter</b> - Sister of Cheryl A. McCue & the late Cathy A. Mertz	Jul 3	Jun 11
<b>John Fry</b> - Son of Cathy McDonald	Mar 19	Jun 14
<b>Elizabeth Gibson, MD</b> - Daughter of Richard J. Brown & The Late Marilyn Brown; Sister of Margaret Nahrganl & Eric Brown	Jun 15	Apr 2
<b>Jennifer Grider</b> - Daughter of Carl & Joan Grider	May 18	Jun 29
<b>Robert Grozier, II</b> - Son of Shirley Grozier; Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Feb 15	Jun 11
<b>Jill Harris</b> - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
<b>Audrey King Koch</b> - Sister of Linda Hollabaugh	Jun 16	Dec 2
<b>Faith Kleppinger</b> - Daughter of John & Barbara Kleppinger; Sister of Susan Schilling & Jill Kleppinger	Jun 8	Jun 15
<b>Zaine Krluc</b> - Son of Ramiz & Merima Krluc	Apr 10	Jun 12
<b>Michael Milot</b> - Son of John & Patti Milot; Brother of Jill	Jun 30	Feb 2
<b>Peter Radocha</b> - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr	Jun 13	Jul 1
<b>Konnor Roy</b> - Son of Dale & Cynthia Roy	Sep 21	Jun 2
<b>Kevin Stewart</b> - Son of Joanne Stewart; Brother of Keith Stewart & The Late Constance Stewart	Oct 6	Jun 15
<b>Craig Yurick</b> - Son of Robert & Sharon Yurick; Brother of Todd Yurick	Aug 5	Jun 21



## 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
♥ Pat Andrew	<b>Jill Patricia Harris</b> <i>We love and miss you and Pops</i>
♥ Nancy & Brian Kleckner	<b>Mardelle M. Parenti-Blume</b> <i>Love and miss you so much!</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](http://www.lehighvalleytcf.org) for group information, past and present newsletters & helpful links
- ♥ Like and Follow our facebook page: [www.facebook.com/TCFLehighValley](http://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*

protector, and this sense of failure can result in strong feelings of guilt and low self-esteem. You may also become overprotective towards any surviving children. At the same time, it is possible that in the early stages of your grief you will be preoccupied with the dead child to the exclusion of your other children, if you have them. It is the dead child you want and who embodies for you all that is ideal. The effect on the remaining children, who cannot replace the dead child or compete with this "perfect angel", is likely to be profound.



If the dead child was your only child, you lose your identity as a parent, and if you lost your first child through miscarriage, or the baby was stillborn, or died soon after birth, you may feel a sense of inadequacy and failure. In a number of ways children embody parents' hopes for the future. Their death means that they will not be able to care for you in old age when the protective, caring roles are reversed.

Your child's death also deprives you of your claim to immortality. The characteristics that have made you what you are will not now be passed on to future generations.

All parents struggle to find a meaning for their loss. Your sense of what is right and fair is deeply shaken, and you seek a purpose for the death which will restore meaning to your life and the belief that your world is still basically safe. For, after all, if a child can die, anything can happen.

### **Trying to Understand**

Anyone who may be trying to understand what it feels like to lose a child might find it helpful to remember what one bereaved mother said in reply to someone who thought she should be "over it" after two years. *"Which one of your children could you do without?"*

*Jan McLaren,  
Director & Senior Counselor of Laura Center,  
Leicester, UK*

## **Little Boy Blue**

The little toy dog is covered with dust,  
But sturdy and stanch he stands;  
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,  
And his musket molds in his hands.

Time was when the little toy dog was new  
And the soldier was passing fair,  
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue  
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now, don't you go till I come," he said,  
"And don't you make any noise!"  
So toddling off to his trundle-bed  
He dreamed of the pretty toys.

And as he was dreaming, an angel song  
Awakened our Little Boy Blue,--  
Oh, the years are many, the years are long,  
But the little toy friends are true.

Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,  
Each in the same old place,  
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,  
The smile of a little face.

And they wonder, as waiting these  
long years through,  
In the dust of that little chair,  
What has become of our Little Boy Blue  
Since he kissed them and put them there.



*Eugene Field  
1850 - 1895  
American Writer, Poet, and Bereaved Father*

*A Father hold his children's hands for just a little while,  
But he holds them in his heart forever*

## Of Slippers, Trout and Things that Fit

No one has ever accused me of being the master of analogies so please bear with me. I used to have a pair of slippers that from years of wear had conformed to my feet and afforded me a wonderful fit. After a long day at work, a shower, some sweats and my slippers were a welcome respite. One day I broke a toe and thus changed the way my slippers fit. At first they were downright uncomfortable, but I stuck it out; before long they had adapted and were fine once again, but not quite the same.

On a larger life scale, the outdoors has always been my soul's slippers. A day afield watching a bird dog work, a day on a trout stream or a day spent in a tree stand were all that I needed to renew myself. It wasn't entirely about quail, trout, or deer; it was about my part in nature, the food chain, and even my place in the universe.

When Johnny was killed not even the outdoors was a refuge for me. Ruth and I had a trip planned to do some fishing on the White River for the 3rd week of March. Since Johnny was killed March 5th, we decided to cancel the trip. At the urging of my doctor, we did take the trip taking along Blake and my parents. The weather was good, the scenery was great, the fish were biting, and my mind was 350 miles away in a cemetery. There was no enjoyment in watching Blake catch his first rainbow.

Later that fall when deer season rolled around I again was less than excited. For those of you who know me and know what a fanatic I am about hunting, this comes as an alarming confession. You see, I start planning next year's hunt the minute this year's is over. It goes far beyond the ethics of hunting; It is a chance to be with old friends and to be surrounded by nature. So at the urging of family and friends I went. It was just after Johnny's birthday, and only on the tangible level of herd management and putting some much enjoyed venison in my freezer was it a success. Otherwise it was an awful weekend.

When a friend called and invited me to join him and some other guys for three days in mid-February on the White River, I didn't exactly jump on it. But after some urging from Ruth I decided to go. It

turned out to be the right decision because somewhere on that river I smiled again. Once again I saw the beauty of the stream and realized how much I love Johnny and missed him, but that he is with me everywhere I go. This trip helped me survive the first anniversary of his death.

I am glad that we taped that fishing trip with Blake because now as I watch the video I can really feel joy as he lands that trout. This year deer season felt better, but by no means normal. I just returned from a hunting trip to Alabama and I had a million reasons and fears to keep me from going, but only one to make me go. You see, I knew that it would help. I had a lot of time to sit and watch God's nature show. Sometimes sitting and thinking, sometimes just sitting and being a part of the landscape of life.

Just like those slippers, my life no longer fits, but as with those shoes my life is beginning to adapt. Do I honestly believe that it will ever be the same? No, how could it be? I'll always see that empty seat in the boat, the shotgun that will forever go unfired sitting in the cabinet. Johnny is gone, but now I find myself looking ahead. Ahead to those days of just sitting in the woods or on the stream.

I'll never stop looking back to Johnny. I'll always love him and miss him. I'm sure I'll have that twinge of anger and feel cheated for a long time to come, maybe forever. As the second anniversary of his death rolls around the pain is there so sharp and hard, but there is also a glimmer of hope for the things to come. I've accepted that my life will never be the same, but I refuse to believe that my life will never feel good again. He makes me smile when I think about him and they make me smile when I look at them. It will take a long time but those slippers will fit again.

*Tom Wyatt,  
TCF St. Louis*





## It's June

It might have been her wedding. It was supposed to be his graduation day; his friends are there - he is not. You had always planned to take them to Disneyland, but it is too late for that, now.

When they died, they took some of your future as well; they took your dreams for them. They left a hole in your life and you will never feel completely whole again.

Should you accept those invitations to weddings and graduations? Only you know what is comfortable for you...

Give yourself all the room you need, no matter what anyone else says. Perhaps this year, you will want to send a card or gift instead of attending the event.

A couple in our Chapter went to their son's friend's wedding reception and skipped the wedding ceremony, which would have been too painful for them.

One mom said she left a graduation with mixed emotions. She ached for her son's place in line, getting his diploma; but she also felt honored to have been invited by her son's friend and proud when they brought her flowers "for Jim," and she loved hearing all the stories about her son that they shared.

What you have left is the love you feel for them, the memories that they left you-- these will always be a part of you. In this way, they a part of your future.

This a very sad and difficult time for you, so do something nice for yourself today. Isn't that what your child would have wanted?

*L.E. Skagit Chapter, Mount Vernon, WA*

## Strength

In the early days of my grief, a tear would well up in my eyes, a lump would form in my throat, but you would not know - I would hide it, And I am strong

In the middle days of my grief, I would look ahead and see that wall that I had attempted to go around as an ever present reminder of a wall yet unscaled. Yet I did not attempt to scale it for the strong will survive - And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief, I learned to climb over that wall step by step - remembering, crying, grieving And the tears flowed steadily as I painstakingly went over. The way was long, but I did make it, For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief, a tear will well up in my eyes, a lump will form in my throat, but I will let that tear fall and you will see it. Through it you will see that I still hurt and I care, **For I am strong.**

*Terry Jago TCF, Regina, Canada*

Courage doesn't always roar.  
Sometimes courage is the  
little voice at the end of the  
day that says I will try again  
tomorrow

*Mary Ann Radmacher*



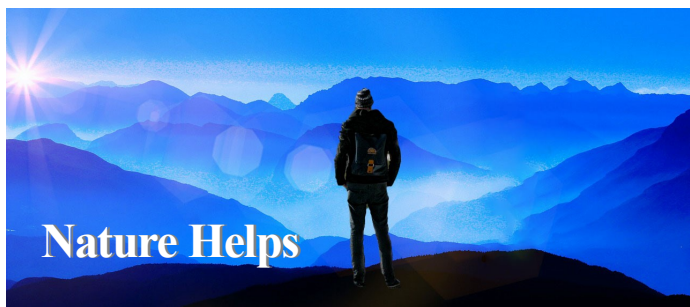
## June Birth Stone Pearl

Pearls are the only gemstones made by living creatures. Mollusks produce pearls by depositing layers of calcium carbonate around microscopic irritants that get lodged in their shells.

Is this what you are doing with your grief? Protecting yourself by adding layers of distance from others? Open your Clam (Grief) up so that others may Hold (Help) the beauty of the gem (Resolution) that is within you!

*TCF, The Greater Baltimore Chapter*

# Sibling Page



We often speak of life as a journey and those of us that grieve the death of a loved one are said to walk a journey of grief. Shawn Brunner is not just walking this path of grief metaphorically, but is walking the Appalachian Trail as he learns to go on adventures without the physical presence of his older brother, Joseph. Joseph and Shawn had the world and when Joseph died from a completed suicide in June 2011, Shawn's world shattered. As many of us have discovered, there is solace and comfort to be found in nature. Grief tends to give us a new perspective, a lens of sorts and many of us find that we appreciate a sunset, a cloud formation or the sun filtering through the clouds with new eyes. Shawn had previously experienced both fun and peace in nature during the yearly adventures Joseph and Shawn took, hiking and climbing around the USA, trekking through the Himalaya's and places in between. He finds solace in nature now, as he learns to live with Joseph's death. Shawn is taking that quest for communion with nature a bit further than most of us and will be helping not only himself, but countless others through the funds he hopes to raise for various organizations.

Shawn took a leave of absence from his position at Volume One, in Eau Claire and began his 4 month, 2,178 mile trek on the Appalachian Trail, March 7, 2012. It is also the inaugural hike for a non-profit group, Nature Helps, that Shawn and his wife, Heather, recently started. Nature Help's goal is to raise money, one hike at a time, for various charities. As he walks this path, his non-profit, Nature Helps, hopes to raise money for the organization, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a network of centers staffed around the clock that offers a toll-free number. In the future they hope to continue putting one foot in front of the other by hiking both long trails such as the current adventure of the

Appalachian Trail and shorter distances, perhaps hiking within a national park. Each hike will be an opportunity to increase awareness and funds for a charity.

On Shawn's blog there is an entry that talks about the time and energy spent on deciding what he can carry with him. He carefully weighed it all, trying to get the backpack as light as possible. Grief takes up no space, but the weight can be so heavy. Mary Oliver states it accurately in the poem, Heavy, "it's not the weight you carry, but how you carry it - books, bricks, grief, it's all in the way you embrace it, balance it, carry it". This will be one of the challenges that Shawn faces as he makes his way north from Georgia up to Maine. It is a work in progress for us all as we travel through our lives finding our balance in carrying our joys and our sorrows.

It is said that John Muir, a man who is known for his treks in the High Sierra's and Yosemite, would just throw some oatmeal into a pack, roll up his bedroll and hit the trail. Muir would have been astounded at the hours Shawn spent discerning what he could carry in his pack and the high tech world of backpacking equipment. Still, both Muir and Shawn would be in complete understanding when Muir stated, "Come to the woods, for here is rest". As Shawn walks along the trail, may he find not only rest, but also be aware of the forever love and presence of his hiking partner and brother, Joseph.

*Kim Bodeau*

*TCF Chippewa Valley*

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)

Address

Phone

Email Address

Lehigh Valley Chapter Mailing Address

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY  
C/O BRENDA SOLDERITCH  
415 S. HOKENDAUQUA DR  
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

Easton Chapter Mailing Address

JOHN SZABO  
1514 SCULAC DR  
BETHLEHEM, PA 18020

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