



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Lehigh Valley Chapter*

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



**August**

Volume 37 Issue 8

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TCF, Lehigh Valley  
Chapter 1562

Phone  
484-891-0823

Email:  
tcflehigvalley@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 Aug 14**

*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

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## Feeling Bad about Feeling Good

"In our greatest adversity we find our greatest strength. In that strength we find our greatest healing."

One of our healing goals is to bring happiness back to our lives. We yearn to smile and laugh again. Early in our journey we ask, "Will I ever feel joy again?" or, "Can I ever have a happy moment after the death of my child?" Those emotions seem like elusive, distant dreams that may never happen again. As our world crumbles, it feels like much of our life has ended, and the possibility of regaining even a brief glimpse of happiness seems remote. Yet somehow we manage to get out of bed, go to work, or take care of other children if we're fortunate enough to have them, and the world keeps turning even though our hearts bleed. As time passes and we do our grieving/healing work, we begin to have happy moments. It's what we want, but when we laugh again, and it's true heartfelt laughter without our masks, we may think. "What right do I have to be happy when my child is dead?" or, "If I feel better, am I abandoning my child?" Those questions can bring feelings of guilt and rob us of any healing we've felt. Having that guilt is common and normal, but sustaining that guilt can keep us from continuing to heal. So what can we do to let go of that guilt and continue on our healing path?

I believe the reason we smile again is because we're fulfilling another of our grieving goals, which is the return of the life of our child. We smile, we laugh, and we feel better because we think of our child as living, living through our memories. When my son died, I believed I would never have him in my life again. His life, in any form, was gone forever. I now know that's not true. It took many years and a lot of grief work, but when I was able to let go of his physical death, his life force and spirit re-entered me, along with my smile. Sadly, the bodies of our children will never come back. That's a tough reality to acknowledge. Our greatest suffering comes from not being able to hold them, see them, or interact directly with them. So much of who they are was wrapped up in their bodies. When their bodies left, so did they... or so we thought.

Our kids are much more than just their bodies. Even though we miss them terribly, when we close our eyes and think of our child, good memories can come to us. That, too, is the child we know and love. Early on, those memories may have made us cry because we knew they'd be making no more. Over time, as we challenge our grief and do our work, those memories can make us smile, even though we will at times have a tear in our eye. Those memories of a living child we'll always have, and need for our healing. So go ahead and smile without guilt. Go ahead and laugh and feel

*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>Carol Chanitz</b> - Daughter of Jay & Ruth Chanitz  | Aug 25 | Aug 25 |
| <b>Joseph Chanitz</b> - Son of Jay & Ruth Chanitz  | Jul 16 | Aug 28 |
| <b>Michael Conelias</b> - Son of Trent & Joanne Conelias   | Dec 10 | Aug 1  |
| <b>Hope Davidson</b> - Daughter of Dean & Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson  | Aug 8  | Feb 8  |
| <b>Jillian Faustner</b> - Daughter of Joan Cottone; Sister of Jennifer, Jessica & James  | Aug 7  | Oct 21 |
| <b>Brenda Fehr Hatrak</b> - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr, Sr.; Sister of Barbara R. Burgin & David A. Fehr, Jr.; Granddaughter of Elwood & Mary Mann & Warren & Rose Fehr | Aug 31 | Jan 8  |
| <b>Eric Graver</b> - Son of Mary L Graver  | Aug 17 | Jul 9  |
| <b>Matt Kush</b> - Son of Rick & Ann Kush; Brother of Mike & Jenn  | Aug 24 | Feb 10 |
| <b>Michael Leh</b> - Son of Jeneane Leh; Brother of Dayna & Samantha Leh   | Nov 11 | Aug 19 |
| <b>Joseph Lestishock</b> - Son of Marjorie Lestishock  | Aug 30 | Nov 2  |
| <b>Jim Minter</b> - Brother of Jeanine Minter  | Aug 15 | Mar 14 |
| <b>PJ Pfenning</b> - Son of Maureen Pfenning; Brother of Amanda Sciarillo & Lauren Pfenning  | Aug 30 | Nov 5  |
| <b>James Ralls</b> - Son of Tina Ralls; Brother of Timothy & Geoffrey  | Jan 2  | Aug 17 |
| <b>Jason Rute</b> - Son of Linda Cavanaugh   | Aug 25 | Nov 13 |
| <b>Lauren Schneck</b> - Daughter of James & Lisa Schneck   | Aug 10 | Dec 2  |
| <b>Anthony Sisonick</b> - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick  | Nov 8  | Aug 27 |
| <b>Jonelle Sisonick</b> - Daughter of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Sister of Nicholas Sisonick  | May 22 | Aug 3  |
| <b>Benjamin Steinert</b> - Son of MaryAnne Steinert  | Aug 1  | Apr 9  |
| <b>Michael Szabo</b> - Son of John & Maria Szabo, Jr   | Aug 2  | Aug 17 |
| <b>David Uecker</b> - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker ;Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki   | Aug 2  | Oct 3  |
| <b>Kade Veltri</b> - Son of Kerianne Veltri  | Feb 5  | Aug 26 |
| <b>Jonathan Weiss</b> - Brother of Ginger Renner   | Aug 20 | Jan 22 |
| <b>Christina Williamson</b> - Daughter of Chris & Kim Williamson; Sister of the late Christopher Jayden Williamson   |        | Aug 6  |
| <b>Adam Wolk</b> - Son of Michael & Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk   | Aug 1  | Oct 22 |
| <b>Hunter Yeagle</b> - Son of Terree & Brett Oakwood   | Aug 1  | Sep 6  |
| <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.

| Contributor    | Loved One   |
|----------------|---|
| ♥Denise Myers  | <b>David W. Myers</b><br><i>We love you and miss you! Love, Denise, Travis, Ben, Crystal, Cody &amp; Brittany</i> |
| ♥David Bremmer | <b>Hunter Bremmer</b><br><i>I think of you every day, All my love!, Dad</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*

*Continued from page 2*

good about laughing. It's your child who's bringing that joy to your life. They live, not like they did before, but in the best possible way we let them live. They live in our hearts, our lives, and in our joy. Feel good about feeling good.

*Rob Anderson, TCF Boston '05 Workshop*

## Feel

Feel no guilt in laughter,  
For he knows how much you care.  
Feel no sorrow in a smile  
That he's not there to share

You cannot grieve forever...  
He would not want you to.  
He hopes that you would carry on  
The way you always do.

So talk about the good times  
And the ways you showed you cared,  
The days you spent together,  
All the happiness you shared.

Let memories surround you,  
A word someone may say  
Will suddenly recapture  
A time, an hour, a day.

That brings him back as clearly  
As though he were still here,  
And fills you with the feelings  
That he is ever near.

For if you keep those moments,  
You will never be apart,  
And he will live forever---  
Locked safe within your heart.

*Author Unknown*

## Hello, Good-bye

Where's the Navigator of your destiny?  
Where is the Dealer of this hand?  
Who can explain life and its brevity?  
'Cause there is nothing here that I can understand

You and I have barely met  
And I just don't want to let go of you yet

Noah, hello, good-bye  
I'll see you on the other side  
Noah, sweet child of mine  
I'll see you on the other side

And so I hold your tiny hand in mine  
For the hardest thing I've ever had to face  
Heaven calls for you before it calls for me  
When you get there, save me a place

A place where I can share your smile  
And I can hold you for more than just awhile

*Songwriters:*

*Michael W. Smith. & Wayne Kirkpatrick*

## Bereaved Parents

Different ages  
Different stages  
Different issues  
Same pain  
Daily strain  
Occasional tissues  
Our children have died  
Often is all we know  
A fact we fear to hide  
Despite our ever-present woe  
We live with pride  
Though broken-hearted  
To love, remember, and grow

*Victor Montemurro, TCF Medford, NY*

## You Are Not Alone

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning it's difficult to get out of bed much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better.

We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way in a bewildering experience for which no one can truly be prepared. When you're newly bereaved, suddenly you find yourself on an emotional roller-coaster where you have no idea what to expect next. Here are thoughts some of you may be experiencing or feeling (many of these will apply to bereaved siblings and grandparents):

### *Psychological*

- Your memory has suddenly become clouded. You're shrouded in forgetfulness. You'll be driving down the road and not know where you are or remember where you're going. As you walk, you may find yourself involved in "little accidents" because you're in a haze,
- You fear that you are going crazy.
- You find there's a video that constantly plays in an endless loop in your mind, running through what happened.
- You find your belief system is shaken and you try to sort out what this means to your faith.
- Placing impossible deadlines on yourself. you go back to work but find that your mind wanders and it's difficult to function efficiently or. some days at all. Others wonder when you'll be over "it"; not understanding that you'll never be the same person you were before your child died and the passage of time will not make you so.
- You find yourself reading the same paragraph over and over again trying to understand what someone else has written.

### *Emotional*

- You rail against the injustice of not being allowed the choice to die instead of your child.
- You find yourself filled with anger, whether it be at your partner, a person you believe is responsible for your child's death. God, yourself, and even your child for dying.
- You yearn to have five minutes, an hour, a day back with your child so you can tell your child of your love

or thoughts left unsaid.

- Guilt becomes a powerful companion as you blame yourself for the death of your child. Rationally you know that you were not to blame - you most certainly would have saved your child if you'd been given the chance.
- You feel great sadness and depression as you wrestle with the idea that everything important to you has been taken from you. Your future has been ruined and nothing can ever make it right.

### *Physical*

- Either you can't sleep at all or sleep all the time. You feel physical exhaustion even when you have slept.
- You no longer care about your health and taking care of yourself - it just doesn't seem that important anymore.
- You're feeling anxiety and great discomfort- you're told they're panic attacks.
- The tears come when you least expect them.
- Your appetite is either gone or you overeat

### *Family & Social*

- If you have surviving children, you find yourself suddenly overprotective, not wanting to allow them out of your sight. Yet you feel like a bad parent because it's so difficult to focus on their needs when you're hurting so bad yourself.
- You find that your remaining family at home grieves the loss differently and you search for a common ground which seems difficult to find.
- You've been told by well-meaning people, even professionals, that 70-80-90 percent of all couples divorce after their child dies. You are relieved to find that new studies show a much lower divorce rate, from 12-16%, believed to be caused by the "shared experience" aspect of the situation.
- Old friends seem to fade away as you learn they cannot comprehend the extent or length of your grief.
- Things you liked to do which seemed so important before now seem meaningless.
- Others say you'll someday find "closure." not understanding that closure never applies when it is the death of your child.
- Fleeting thoughts of pleasurable activities bring about feelings of guilt. If you child can't have fun, how can you do anything that brings you enjoyment?
- New friends come into your life who understand some of your grief because they've been there themselves.

*The Compassionate Friends Website*  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)



## I Don't Know Why

I don't know why. I'll never know why. I don't have to know why. I don't like it. I don't have to like it. What I do have to do is make a choice about my living. What I do want to do is accept it and go on living. The choice is mine. I can go on living, valuing every moment in a way I never did before, or I can be destroyed by it and, in turn, destroy others. I thought I was immortal. That my family and my children were also. That tragedy happened only to others. But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable. So I am choosing to go on living, making the most of the time I have, valuing my family and friends in a way never possible before.

*By Iris M. Bolton from her book, "My Son...My Son" Reprinted from For Those Who Give and Grieve, Vol 19 No 1*

## The Butterfly in Our Lives

Most often we hear, in our Compassionate Friends circles, of the butterfly representing the lives of our children who have died. Their spirit lives on and our memories live on, often in fleeting moments. But I think the butterfly's life cycle - metamorphosis could just as easily represent our own lives. We seem to fit the four stages of the cycle.



**THE EGG:** When we are small, we are protected, changing, and living in a somewhat small and safe world - much like the butterfly egg attached to a leaf somewhere.



**THE CATERPILLAR:** The caterpillar is much like our lives before the death of our child or children. We go through the day doing what we need to do. We grow a lot and we change somewhat slowly. We devour many things in daily life - work, church, Little League. And then the child is gone. We change.



**THE COCOON:** After the death of our child, we shut ourselves off from so much because of our grief. We often encase ourselves in the blanket of grief and depression - that is what protects us from the horrible pain.



**THE BUTTERFLY:** The pain lessens and we begin to heal as we work through the grief process, and we begin to see a ray of light - a little color. Some of the weight is removed. We break open our cocoon and begin to reach out ever so slightly and touch life again, just to see if it will hurt too much. As we discover the brighter days and brilliant colors of life, we become more like the butterfly. We are free to once again be a part of life and we can move about more easily and begin to take some of the nectar from life.

*Dale Tallant, TCF Tulare, CA*

*It has been said "Time heals all wounds". I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind (protecting its sanity) covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens. But it is never gone.*

*Rose Kennedy*

# Sibling Page

## **“Don’t Cry Because Its Over... Smile Because It Happened”**

- ◆ I cry when I think about how much I miss my brother!
- ◆ I cry when I long to hear his voice or see him come around a corner.
- ◆ I cry when I think about all the times we won’t be sharing together anymore - - holidays, birthdays, family times.
- ◆ I cry when I think about the wonderful person he was, and how many more incredible things he could have accomplished, if he was still here.
- ◆ I cry when I think of why he had to go so soon, and what I could have done to help him stay with us a little longer.
- ◆ I cry when I think of his pain, and I think of why it had to happen to someone so undeserving of it.
- ◆ I cry when I think about my own two children, and the uncle they will never get to truly know, and the fun times they will never get to have together.
- ◆ I cry when I think of all the people who will never get to meet my brother, and who will never get to experience his warmth and caring.
- ◆ I cry when I think of the family of his own, that my brother will never get to have.
- ◆ I cry when I think of the pain and hurt I see in my parents, as they endure the suffering caused from losing a child.
- ◆ I cry when I think of the pain my sister and I share, as we work through the loss of our little brother.

- ☺ I smile when I think of the thirty years of great times we had together.
- ☺ I smile when I think of how happy we were to get a little brother.
- ☺ I smile when I think of how much he was spoiled by us, as the baby of the family.
- ☺ I smile when I think of how much I respected him, as he grew up to become an outstanding young man, Marine and Police Officer.

- ☺ I smile when I think of his humor, outgoing personality, and awesome smile.
  - ☺ I smile when I think of our last few times together and the talks we had, and the support he was there to lend.
  - ☺ I smile when I think of all the all-too-few good years my children got to spend with their uncle Denny.
  - ☺ I smile when I think of all the people he touched, and the lives he made such a difference in.
  - ☺ I smile when I think of how proud my family has always been of my brother.
  - ☺ I smile when I think of how loved my brother is, and always will be, no matter where he is.
  - ☺ I smile when I think about how lucky I am to have gotten to have someone like my brother in my life, no matter how far-too-short our time was together.
  - ☺ I smile when I think of him watching over me, and being with me, wherever I go, in my heart, where he will never be forgotten.
- “Don’t cry because it’s over... Smile because it happened.”

Kelly Mallory Herrmann From This Healing Journey  
An Anthology for Bereaved Sibling

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