



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 38 Issue 12

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December

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is an international non-profit self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

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.

TCF, Lehigh Valley
Chapter 1562

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Our Chapter Meetings are held at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Dining Room, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm

All bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings (over the age of 16) are welcome to attend. Participation in group sharing is confidential and voluntary. Our hope is that being among others who understand you may feel free to talk, cry and share, but it is okay to just come and listen too.

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

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Sunday December 8th - TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting (see page 2)
- Monday December 9th - TCF Lehigh Valley Chapter Meeting
December's meeting will feature our remembrance tree and candle lighting followed by a sharing session. Members will be given an ornament to write the name of their child and place on the tree
- Monday January 13
- Monday February 10

Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the Facebook page

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 take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our members 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.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your first meeting, You were hurt, confused and felt alone in your grief. Remember the comfort you felt when you found you weren't alone and that others that had been where you were and survived. Remember the love and support you felt as fellow members offered on your grief journey. Now you are stronger and may not feel the need to attend meetings for aid and comfort. We need you though. New members need you. They need your encouragement, support and wisdom. If you haven't attended a meeting in awhile please consider coming back to offer hope to those who now feel lost and see no hope.

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

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor

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,
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The Compassionate Friends

Worldwide Candle Lighting

Join us on December 8, 2024



*"...that their light
may always shine."*

TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting - Sunday, Dec. 8 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** - Gather with family and friends, light your remembrance candle at pm local time and keep them lit for 1 hour. You may want to include music or poetry or sit in quiet reflection.
- **Attend a local gathering** - Our chapter will not be holding a wwcl 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.

Chapter Notes and Announcements

I have the bittersweet task to announce that Brenda Solderitch is moving and has retired from her longtime position as chapter treasurer.

We are grateful for her many years of service and dedication to the chapter in her role as treasurer, as well as steering committee member, special events committee member and friend. We are very sad to her see go, but wish her happiness and peace in her well-earned retirement.

Please note there is a new mailing address for chapter communications and love gift submittals

New Address:
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY
C/O KATHLEEN COLLINS
2971 PHEASANT DR.
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

*Kathleen Collins
Newsletter Editor*

Our Children Remembered

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

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer; Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer	Dec 12	Jul 27
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, Donations & Contributions



With no fees, our volunteer staffed chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of donations (Love Gifts). Each donation, of any size, allows us to maintain member support, publish our monthly newsletter, and manage chapter expenses. Donations may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Gifts are tax deductible. The Love Gift Donation can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

Contributor	Loved One
♥David Bremmer	Hunter David Bremmer <i>Happy 44th Birthday, all my love, Dad</i>
♥Denise Myers	Cody Myers We love and miss you. Mom, Travis, Crystal & Benjamin
♥Linda Hollabaugh	Richard "Rich" Lee Hollabaugh & Wayne K. Hollabaugh (Father) <i>Love, Memories & H.B.</i>

Our thanks to the following for their contributions to the chapter

*Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville
For our meeting space*

*The Matt Kush Foundation
In Memory of Matt Kush*

*United Way
Payroll Contributors*

May it comfort you to know that
death cannot diminish the important ways your loved one touched your life,
that grief cannot take away the happiness you shared, that sorrow will fade in time
but love remains forever.

Author Unknown

Coping With The Holidays

Holidays used to be a wonderful time of year. The death of your child may have changed much of the way you move through the last weeks of the year. In this article, we will look at how bereaved parents coped during the months of November and December during the first few years following the death of their child.

As I've done in previous articles I called on parents and said, "I'm writing an article for TCF magazine about coping with the upcoming holidays. Looking back, what did you do that helped you through those rough two months?" Here's what they said.

On December 23rd four of us couples met at the cemetery where our children are buried and we had a short ceremony at each child's grave. We each brought a coke can with a candle inserted in it and something to read such as a poem or letter to our child. We lit the candle, did our reading. In this way, it signified that our child is with us. We leave the candles and coke cans and pick them up the next day. Years later it continues to feel good to look forward to taking this day out for our child to honor our child. As we finish at the last grave we do a closing ceremony (such as holding hands or singing a song). As a reward, we go out to dinner.

Perhaps you're not ready to do anything. Here is what a mother said:

What helped me during the holidays was absolutely refusing to smile and refusing to carry on the usual traditions. I did what was comfortable for me. My relatives didn't seem to like it, but I was a mess and just couldn't bring myself to do any sort of so called "celebrating." The first year I actually stayed by myself. The second year I scheduled myself to work. This year I may either do volunteer work or head to Canada. Thanksgiving is great in Canada - no Thanksgiving!

Here is what a couple has done since their son died six years ago:

The first year I went to the mall to buy people things. I walked into the stores, looked at items, picked them up, and put them back. I walked out frustrated. So, I didn't get anybody anything the first year. The next year I went to a craft store and bought a large candle, a little artificial tree, miniature lights, and decorations. We put the candle and tree in our kitchen, where we spend the majority of our time.

The candle stays lit all day. Over the years we buy ornaments that remind us of our son. At holiday dinner, just before we eat, we each go around and say the name of a person who died. But we have learned to do it quick before the food gets cold. Then, as we're eating we say, "Remember when. . .?" Sometimes our food gets a little salty, but it's worth it. It's like our son is there with us. The first time we did it a couple of people were uncomfortable, but once they got into it, it was OK.

A mother whose daughter died eight years ago suggested the following:

A stocking is hung for each person in the family, including my daughter. Into her stocking family members write a note stating what she taught them. The notes are read after dinner. It is a wonderful way to talk about her life and acknowledge what she meant to us.

A couple whose son died four years ago shares their experience of the first three years:

During the first Christmas, my daughter thought she would help by keeping me busy shopping for her three children. There I was pushing a cart with a gift list of toys and tears streaming down my cheeks. All I wanted to do was crawl in a hole and pull everything with me. I'm not sure how we made it through the holidays, but we eventually realized that things would never be as they were before. The other family members thought they were helping, but we had to decide for ourselves what was best. The second Christmas was the hardest. On Christmas Eve we went to church and to the cemetery and on Christmas day we delivered our gifts and spent the day alone. We were feeling sorry for ourselves, but that's all we felt we could do at the time. The next years we decided to do something for others. I called the nursing home and asked the director if they needed any help serving the holiday meal. She was very excited to have us. A few days before, we had our grandchildren over and instead of making cookies, we made table favors, including cards, candy, and ribbons. On Christmas day we dressed in our Santa hats and headed to the nursing home. When we arrived, we were greeted with smiling, appreciative faces. We served their breakfast and many of the residents took us back to their rooms to see their gifts and family pictures. While honoring the memory of our son we forgot our grief that Christmas day.

Continued from page 4

In closing, let me leave you with some holiday stress relievers:

There is not enough time for everything. Ask yourself, "What am I willing to give up?" and then, let it go.

Practice saying "No" to the things you do not want to do. Here are versions of the same message: "No thanks." "I just can't." "I won't be doing it this year." "Sorry." Remember, when you say "No", you don't have to give reasons.

Plan ahead. Make yourself sit down and write out your "things to do" list. Then go through it and, as mentioned in #1, ask yourself, "What can I omit?" Also, arrange your list in priority fashion to put the most important things at the top of the list.

If you must purchase gifts, ask yourself, "How can I do this with the least amount of stress?" For example, consider using the Internet, having someone else pick up the gifts, consider giving money or gift cards as gifts, or have a family lottery where each person picks a name from a hat and buys only that person a gift. Try one of these ideas this year as an experiment just to see how it works.

Start early. Pick a date to get done many of your obligations now. Don't put it off. Remember how crazy last minute stuff can be. You don't need any more craziness in your life.

Do not rely on your memory to keep track of things to do in your life. Presume you will forget things and write everything down.

Ask yourself, "How can I work smarter, not harder?"

And finally ask yourself, "In what ways do I wish to keep things the same and how do I want to change things?"

As you finish this article and begin to put it down, you might be saying to yourself, "Yes, there were a couple of good ideas. I should do them some time." Quick! Capture the moment now! Tape this article up on your wall so that you will see it every day as a reminder of helpful ways to get through the holidays. I'm willing to bet that your child would agree with me. So, get started, OK?

Bob Baugher

Dr. Bob Baugher is a Psychology Instructor and Death Educator at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington. He has given more than 600 workshops on coping with grief and loss.

Posted December 4, 2020

www.compassionatefriends.org



Like the children, here too short a time,
lighting our lives, then too soon gone.
Gathering together, being here for each other
on one special night this time each year,
We light the candles with pride and sorrow
reminding the world, they once were here.
Their lives live on in us, the living,
who guard their memories like precious gold.
To have them back for just one minute
we would give a thousand fold.

Tonight we say they are loved,
they're remembered,
and they will always be.
Like candle flames, they warm our souls
and light our lives, to help us see.
A river of light, flowing east to west
lingering an hour,
then moving on.
Like the children, here too short a time,
lighting our lives . . . then ... gone.

TCF Worldwide Candlelighting December 8th 7pm

Whether you choose to join with other bereaved families at a local observance or to take part in your own home, we encourage you to light a candle and speak the name of a child gone too soon.

A Loss before the First Christmas

I think the only thing sadder than looking back at Christmases that were and will never be again is having no Christmases to look back to at all. There are some people who believe it is easier to lose an infant than an older child, and I am sure that for some parts of grief, they are right, but this is not one of them.

Memories are painful, but they are treasured, wonderful things that can help fill the emptiness. Christmas is one of the big expectations. Matter of fact, it is one of the reasons we have children. So, if our child dies before sharing a Christmas with us, we know we are missing something wonderful, but we don't know exactly what. We will try as hard as we can, over and over again, to imagine our children on Christmas, but we cannot fabricate a memory. We can not see our child's face light up, or hear their sweet voices, or watch their movements. So the more we try, the more frustrated we become. We hurt horribly, and we are empty, lonely, and devastated. But because we did not have them long enough, most people (even ourselves, sometimes) will feel we have no right to grieve this Christmas.

So I've got to tell you, we have as much right and as many reasons to cry and grieve, as any parent whose child has died.

*Laura Bouse,
TCF Hardin County, OH*

Dimming Lights

For most, Chanukah is a joyous time with dreidels, gifts and lights.

We also once had
But since you have died,
My heart is only heavy and sad.

Wherever you are my dearest son,
I pray you are at peace -
Seeing the menorah lights
Giving me strength to get
Through these dim and dark Eight days...

Outwardly the Chanukah candles
Are glimmering bright-
But inside of me burns only
A shimmer of blurred light.

by Ceil Katz, TCF, South Hampton Chapter

The Holidays

With the changing of the seasons
The holidays come once more
Busy shoppers, joyous laughter,
Pretty wreaths hung on the door.

Though I pause in the twilight hour
And hear the children play
My joy is forever silenced
By that dreadful day in May.

My love of the holiday season
Now lives in another time
Memories of past Christmases
When all in my life was fine.

The tree lights no longer sparkle
My heart is cold inside
My holiday joy ended
The day my only child died.

I stand outside now looking in
To a world I no longer know
My tears flow like a river
And melt the falling snow.

I turn now to the meaning
Of what Christmas really is
My pain softened by believing
In spirit, he will always live.

by Vicki Tushingham, Los Angeles



*Perhaps they are not
the stars, but rather
openings in Heaven
where the love of
our lost ones pours
through and shines
down upon us to let
us know they are
happy.*

Inuit Proverb

Sibling Page

Please Don't Overlook Me!

I know my size is smaller
my hands are littler
my legs are shorter,
but my HEART can hurt
just like yours.

I'm a CHILD
You're an adult...
Please don't overlook me!

I know my vocabulary isn't the greatest
my attention span lacks longevity
my logic sometimes seems irrational,
but my MIND can question
death just like yours can.

I'm a TEENAGER
You're an adult
Please don't overlook me!

I know my needs seem less important
my feelings seem less controlled
my actions are hard to understand,
but my BODY needs a hug
just like yours does.

I'm YOUNGER
You're older,
Please don't overlook me!

I know tears are hard to show,
fears are difficult to face,
death means not coming back,
but my SOUL searches for reassurance
just like yours does.

I'm HURTING
You're hurting too...
Please don't overlook me!

TCF Sibling Page,
Carson City, NV

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

Please Note:

Siblings are welcome to attend our compassionate friends meetings. We just ask that you are at least 16 years of age.

Online resource:

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". There you will find options for moderated chatrooms, private facebook pages and information on how to join.



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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.

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 find and then choose online communities.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

<p>TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753</p> <p>TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429</p> <p>TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695</p>	<p>TCF Easton - 610-515-3526</p> <p>GRASP - 484-788-9440 (grief recovery after substance passing)</p>
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Love Gift Form

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 1st

<p>Contributor Name <i>(this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Address</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Phone</p> <hr/>	<p>Mail this form to:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY C/O KATHLEEN COLLINS 2971 PHEASANT DR. NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067</p> </div> <p>Email Address</p> <hr/>
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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. <i>Deadlines listed above. Late submissions are published in the next edition.</i>
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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
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