



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 39 Issue I

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January

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.

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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

- Monday January 13
- Monday February 10
- Monday March 10

Meeting Cancellations

Those on the meeting text list will be notified via text. All others please call 484-891-0823

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:

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Inside this issue:

Chapter Notes	2
Article - January	2 - 4
Our Children Remembered	3
Love Gifts	3
Poems - Winter Memories; Missing You	5
Articles Lost Potential; We are doing well with our Grief when we are Grieving	6
Poem - Your Pup and I	6
<u>Sibling Page</u> Article - Celebrating Life is a Better Way to Cope with Death	7
Love Gift Form	8

Chapter Notes

Recent Events

TCF Lehigh Valley Candle Light Remembrance

On Monday December 9th we gathered together to light a candle and place a special ornament on our remembrance tree in honor the children who are deeply missed and forever loved. Many thanks to Bethany Wesleyan Church for use of the hall and all of our participants.

TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting

On Sunday December 8th TCF National held its annual worldwide candle lighting. Hundreds of thousands of people participated to commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon. Candles were light at 7pm in every time zone creating a 24 hour wave of light that stretched across the globe.



By Darcie Sims Former VP TCF National Board of Directors

January is depressing. Its a month of bitter cold, gloomy days and leftovers. It's a month of used Christmas bows (surely we should save them for next year...) and things that don't fit (either they didn't fit before the holidays, or they don't fit now). January is also a month of too many days.

January is a let down from the hustle and bustle of the holidays. It is a month to "get through." January is a month to SURVIVE.

I've decided to spend January in my basement. After all, basements are often dark and gloomy (suits my mood), in need of organization (describes my life perfectly) and could use a good clearing (similar to shaking the cobwebs out of my brain).

Therefore, I would like to have Hallmark declare January as BASEMENT month and come out with a suitable card to help me celebrate my hibernation. That's where I am going to spend the icy, snowy Missouri month of January. I have all sorts of plans. I can tackle the still-packed boxes from our move last summer. I can arrange and rearrange to my heart's content without annoying the family who dwells upstairs, and who thinks that "everything looks fine, Mom."

I can sift through boxes of unknown treasures, sorting and tossing. I can count my blessings in the soft, dim darkness of a basement lit with a single light bulb and no one will see the tears I hid so well during the holidays. I can come up one blessing short and gasp in the pain (always there, but not often brought out to light any more), and then let it dissipate in the far reaches of the basement.

I think I will organize the basement according to the seasons: Spring, with the flower pots, fertilizer, garden seeds, and bicycles; Summer, with

Continued on page 4

Our Children Remembered

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

January Birthdays and Anniversaries

	Birth	Anniv.
Brian Burke - Son of Rich & Mary Burke; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
Mark Dilts, Jr - Son of Mark & Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts	Jan 6	Jul 8
Marguerite "Maggie" Faber - Daughter of Carol Miller	Jan 17	Jan 17
Brenda Fehr Hatrak - Daughter of David & Eileen Fehr, Sr.; Sister of Barbara R. Burgin & David A. Fehr, Jr. Granddaughter of Elwood & Mary Mann and Warren & Rose Fehr	Aug 31	Jan 8
Jessica Finlayson - Daughter of Eric & Jean Dalstad; Sister of Rebecca Dalstad	Mar 19	Jan 22
Carly Grozier - Daughter of Cathie Given	Mar 4	Jan 17
David Grozier - Brother of Laurie, Brenda & Vance	Jan 15	Jan 14
Oliver Klitsch Klitsch - Son of Shawn & Abigail Klitsch; Grandson of Mark & Pam Klitsch	Jan 24	Oct 15
Morgan Knupp - Daughter of Ashlee Knupp	Jan 25	Jan 25
John Kopitskie - Son of Steve & Lisa Kopitskie; Brother of Leslie, Sarah & Matthew	Mar 4	Jan 25
John Leonard, Jr - Son of Jack & Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen	Jul 27	Jan 6
Andrea Luecke - Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
Benjamin Miller - Son of Brian & Caitlin Miller	Aug 5	Jan 11
Marissa Monteverde - Daughter of Nadine Monteverde; Sister of Tanya & Jeremy	Jan 23	Nov 4
James Ralls - Son of Tina Ralls; Brother of Timothy & Geoffrey	Jan 2	Aug 17
Shane Uttard - Son of Brenda Deubler	Jan 15	May 13
Victoria Volkert - Daughter of Joanne Fimiano; Sister of Zacary Volkert	Jan 14	Feb 16
Jonathan Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Aug 20	Jan 22
Liam Whetstone - Son of Cody Whetstone & Linda Haller	Jan 19	Jan 19



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
♥ Don & Connie McNally	Ed McNally <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Mr & Mrs Brian Keckner	Mardelle M. Parenti <i>Merry Christmas Love and miss you!!</i>
♥ Carol A. Miller	Maggie Jo Faber <i>Happy Birthday. Love and miss you, Mom</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

Continued from page 2

the lawn mower, garden hoses and rubber rafts; Fall, will have the rakes and the Halloween decorations. And Winter... Winter will have the snow shovels, snow boots, sleds, ice skates, skis (and crutches)---all stored neatly, side by side. The holiday decorations will be stored halfway between Fall and Winter because of the GREAT DEBATE in our house about WHEN is the proper time to put up the decorations. This debate is topped only by the one about WHEN to take them down. So far, earliest we have discarded the holidays is Christmas afternoon, and Easter wins as the latest!

I will have to have another category in my basement, however. It will be the Fifth Season... the season of Miscellaneous. That's where I stash everything that doesn't fit anywhere else---somewhat like my grief, which seems to pop up at the most inconvenient times. I wish I could compartmentalize it, organize it, so I wouldn't be caught off guard. I wish I could put it away for a time---storing it in the recesses of my basement---knowing where it is when I need it. But grief doesn't work that way (my basement probably won't work that way either!) Grief is there, always. You don't "get over it." you can't hide from it. You can't put it aside until it is convenient. In fact, the more you try to avoid it, the more it catches you. It's a bit like that mysterious gift you once got from some distant relative. The more you try to forget it, the more it stays. Grief is in all the seasons of your life.

But grief doesn't have to be a burden all the time. Like the things you have stored in the basement, it can be dealt with. It doesn't have to be just stashed in the darkest corner of your heart. Part of grief is learning to live without the person who made your life so incredibly wonderful. But the other side of grief is remembering how wonderful life can be and getting busy with not just surviving, but LIVING!

The snowflakes are still just as lovely and mysterious. The spring flowers will bloom again, with their sweet message of life. Summer will bring more warm evenings and fireflies to chase, and Fall will turn its leaves one more time. Winter will come and another January will be celebrated in the basement.

not because it is the only place we can find solace and comfort, but because the sifting and sorting and reorganizing are an important part of our process. Your life with your loved one was filled with moments of laughter. Remember those moments, enjoy them again and again. Don't store them in the basement of your heart.

So won't you join me this month as I make good my New Year's resolution? I resolve to keep my basement clean, organized and usable. It will NOT become a repository for cast offs and the no-longer useful in my life. It will be what it really is: a part of my house, my home, my life.

***"Part of grief
is learning to live
without the person who
made your life so incredibly
wonderful. But the other side
of grief is remembering
how wonderful life
can be "***

I will be in the basement this month, not escaping the snow (I LOVE that!), but getting ready to heal.

LET THE JOY YOUR LOVED ONE'S LIFE BROUGHT TO YOU BEGIN TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THE HURT AND PAIN OF DEATH. The memories will always hurt, but there also will always be LOVE, and you cannot discard, bury or lose the love you shared.

January is BASEMENT MONTH.

*Hugs and Hope.
Darcie*



Winter Memories

The days are getting colder,
And the first snow's not far off

It used to be so pretty,
Gently falling from aloft

But the snow won't be as pretty,
As it gathers on the ground

Cause there'll be a snowman missing,
My son is not around

The playing children's laughter,
Used to be a special song

But this year will be different,
Without my son along.

The song has lost its music,
And it'll be just another day

As I gaze down from my window
And watch the children play

But the snow will again be pretty
In a far off distant time

And we'll build snowmen together,
And never look behind

For now, I'll remain with memories,
But the melting snow will fade

And he builds snowmen to his hearts content,
Cause he lives where its made



Jeremiah Sundown,
TCF Nashville, TN

Missing You

I sometimes talk to your pictures
When no one else is around.
They listen patiently to my ramblings
They smile and never make a sound.

There's one picture in particular
Your eyes right in my line of sight
The smile on your face reflects the joy
On one of the happiest days of your life.

That picture has been my whipping post
Many heavy conversations in the past six years
It's witnessed the gamut of my emotions
It's seen me laugh, it's seen countless tears.

There have even been some times
When that picture almost seemed to smirk
After I sincerely apologized
For all the times I was a jerk.

Of all the pictures that we have of you,
It would be impossible to pick just one.
There's just something about your smile
I didn't see it until you were gone.

So many things you never got to do
Your time ran out before your dreams
came true.
I'll look into your eyes and talk to that picture
I'll see you again someday. I miss you.

Tom Murphy
Greater Cincinnati TCF - East Chapter, OH
In Memory of my son, Brennan Murphy

*We talk about Heaven being so
far away.*

It is within speaking distance.

Dwight L. Moody
TCF Seattle-King County

Lost Potential

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent one thing stuck in my mind. He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would be twenty two this year and graduating from college." You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

Chris Anderson

TCF, Walla Walla, Washington

We are doing well with our grief when we are grieving.

Somehow we have it backwards. We think people are doing well when they aren't crying. Grief is a process of walking through some painful periods toward learning to cope again. We do not walk this path without pain and tears.

When we are in the most pain, we are making the most progress. When the pain is less, we are coasting and resting up for the next steps. People need to grieve. Grief is not an enemy to be avoided; it is a healing path to be walked.

from HOPE Line Newsletter, August 2002

Website: www.hopeforbereaved.com

Your Pup and I



Your old pup sleeps before the fire,
Muzzle resting on outstretched paws.
He twitches with a little yelp,
Reaching to a dream gone bad
that he can't help.

A sound from outside jerks his head alert,
Ears listening intently,
Radar in search of your special step.
Not hearing the sound that he wants,
he looks hurt.

His head goes down with a sigh.
He looks to me with mournful eyes.
I declare I think that dog sometimes cries...
He, like I, never dreamed you'd be the first to die.

He misses you as badly as I.
Even old pups want to know why...
And they grieve, like us, for one last good-bye, And
tonight I joined him as he cried.

Fay Harden, TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

*The children who were with us
in the rush of life,
let them now be with us in the
peace of spirit.*

*Memories are a legacy of hope and courage,
left to help us go on when the giver is gone.*

From "WINTERSUN " by Sascha

I would tell anybody in grief to be kind and gentle to themselves and to NOT COMPARE their journey to the time and distance traveled by others grieving the same loss. There is hope, it may come as the slightest pin hole of light in the darkest of places, but hope is there and it will find you.

*Kris Munsch, Blake's dad
Chapter Unknown*

Sibling Page

Celebrating Life is a Better Way to Cope with Death

Today marks a week since my youngest brother's birthday. However, instead of recalling memories of the family all here together eating cake and ice cream and celebrating the joyous occasion, my mind conjures up images that only seem to surface twice a year: on Jeffrey's birthday and on the anniversary of his death.

Seven years ago Jeffrey died by suicide. Though I was only 14 at the time, and so many years have passed since his death, when his birthday rolls around each year, so does the pain. Today, however, is my last day for mourning. About 3 years ago, I decided, instead of fighting back my emotions or feebly attempting to act as though everything is okay, on his birthday and on the anniversary of his death, I would allow myself a week to mourn and heal. I have even developed a ritual. On these occasions, I dress all in white, sit in a private place with the lights turned off, put on Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath My Wings" (the song she sang in the movie *Beaches* right after her best friend died), light a single white candle, and sort through old photographs of Jeffrey and the family. The color white has, for me, always represented light, rebirth, and newness. Thus, wearing all white is my way of saying, "In stead of mourning his death, I will celebrate his life." Lighting a single candle stems from our Catholic faith. It is a way of showing that the fire of his spirit is still alive. With the heat of the candle I can feel the warmth of his presence. Listening to Midler's song helps me say all the things I didn't get a chance to say, especially when I carefully listen to the words and realize how much they apply to Jeffrey and me. The song seems to have been written for us.

When we were younger, I was the star of the family. The straight-A student who sang in the church choir and excelled in academic and athletic competitions. Jeffrey was the quiet one. He was reserved, an average student, and spent most of his time reading or practicing Ninjitsu. No one was surprised that I commanded most of the attention from my parents. This didn't seem to bother Jeffrey, however. He was easygoing, a good listener, and,

best of all, he always supported me in everything I did. I thought he was the perfect brother. Losing him was extremely hard for me.

Everyone kept telling me to cry and let out the grief I was feeling. Some one even said that a year from now I wouldn't remember how painful this experience was. However, even now I remember how hard it was to return to school and my everyday life, and pretend everything was fine, acting as though I was dealing with his death and would be okay. I know people meant well by sharing their condolences and advising me on the best way to deal with my grief. In the end, I realized no one could truly understand what I was going through and their remedies for relief may have worked for them. However, I needed something more. The first birthday after his death was especially hard, and I dealt with it in a very different way than I do now. I spent the entire month wearing black, closing myself off from everyone around me, and crying every time I had the inclination. I don't regret dealing with his death that way, but I do find solace knowing that seven years later, I can silently mourn with out wearing black, without shutting myself off from the outside world, and without wearing a mask of happiness. I have healed at my own pace and in my own time. I understand now that this is the only advice I could ever give someone experiencing a similar tragedy: make your time and deal with it in your own way. Only your way is the right way. Now I deal with Jeffrey's death the best way I know how - by celebrating his life. In that, I am at peace.

Karma Lowe TCF of Los Angeles Newsletter

Note:

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

Also The Compassionate Friends hosts a moderated chatroom and a facebook page just for bereaved siblings. To join go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the "Find Support" tab.



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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

TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753

TCF Easton - 610-515-3526

TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429

GRASP - 484-788-9440

TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695

(grief recovery after substance passing)

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

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

Address

Phone

Mail this form to:

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

Email Address

I would like to make a donation of _____ ☐ In Memory of ☐ In Honor of ☐ A Chapter Gift (without memorial or honorarium)

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. Deadlines listed above. Late submissions are 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.

I would like my love gift to go toward: (you may choose one or both)

☐ **Outreach** (Newsletter Printing, Postage, Phone, Web etc)

☐ **Office Expenses**