



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Volume 40 Issue 10

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October

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, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm

Our support group provides a confidential and welcoming space for bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult (16 yr +) siblings. We hope that by being among others who understand this profound pain, you will feel free to talk, cry, and share your experiences; it is also perfectly acceptable to simply come and listen.

To honor your loved one, we invite you to bring a picture of your child to display during the meeting on special days or at any time you wish. Refreshments brought in memory of your child are also warmly welcomed.

For additional information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting reminder text list call or text 835-201-4606

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- Monday - October 12
- Monday - November 9 -

Cancellations will be posted on the website & sent to meeting list members

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting can be an emotional experience, but please know that everyone present has experienced the profound loss of a child and shares a deep understanding of the pain you are enduring. We cannot walk your unique grief journey for you, but we can offer to take your hand and walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes; instead, we offer a safe space where we care, share, and understand.

Although each member's circumstances may differ, we have all "been there" and can genuinely say we understand. You are not alone.

To Our Seasoned Members

Think back to your very first meeting. You likely arrived feeling hurt, confused, and deeply alone in your grief. Do you remember the quiet relief of realizing you weren't alone? That others had walked this path and survived? That same love and support you received is now a gift you hold for others. While you have grown stronger and may no longer need the meetings for your own healing, our newest members need *you*. Please consider returning to share the hope that was once shared with you.

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

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• by mail:

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Chapter & Meeting News

Please Note: The chapter's primary phone number has changed. Our new number is 835-201-4606

All other contact details such as email address and website remain the same.

Meetings

9 members attended the September meeting. We hope that everyone found some encouragement at the meeting.

Are you New to The Compassionate Friends?

We want to welcome you, but somehow that word isn't right - this is not a group anyone wants to join. All of us wish no one ever had to walk through that door or receive this newsletter. So when we say welcome perhaps what we really mean is we're so sorry - but we are glad you've found us and hope you will find support at TCF.

Many members of TCF were hesitant to attend that first meeting. We didn't know what to expect. Would we be forced to talk about our child? Did TCF members all share the same faith? Did we have to make a donation or commit to anything? The answer to all these questions is no. We'll listen if you wish to talk; we are members of all faiths and none; there is no cost; and you may attend as often as you wish and stay for as long as you wish. Just come.

Our few rules are simple ones and designed to ensure that TCF is a safe and comfortable place for those grieving a child's death. We request that members maintain confidentiality within the group, and we ask you to respect everyone's right to their individual beliefs. We don't tell each other how to grieve: we just walk together along this most painful of journeys.

Having made the difficult decision to attend, some of us old-timers remember being surprised or disappointed at what we found there. Perhaps we were hoping our grief would begin to ease but instead we woke the next morning feeling even worse. Already overwhelmed with our own pain, now the grief of others weighed on our mind. The parent who was sadly remembering a daughter's death 10 years ago frightened us; would we still feel so sad after all those years? And what about those folks laughing and drinking coffee? How can they seem so carefree?

Perhaps talking about the death of a child isn't such a good idea after all. But thousands of TCF members around the world would say it was a good idea, just not an easy one. Many forced themselves to attend at first, remembering the leader's recommendation that it takes three meetings before a new member should make a decision about TCF. Others wished there

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Our Children Remembered October Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Brian Burke - Son of Rich and Mary Burke ; Brother of Melissa Burke	Jan 3	Oct 9
Oliver Klitsch - Son of Shawn and Abigail Klitsch; Grandson of Mark and Pam Klitsch	Jan 24	Oct 15
Nykolas LaRosa - Son of Shelly Youwakim; Brother of Krystole LaRosa	Sep 25	Oct 28
Andrea Luecke -Daughter of Louise Luecke; Sister of Jennae Luecke	Jan 30	Oct 23
Joseph McDonald - Son of Cathy McDonald	Dec 26	Oct 13
Michael Napolitano - Son of Joseph and Lisa Napolitano	Oct 25	May 15
Jennifer Ortelli - Bryant - Daughter of Wayne and Rebecca Ortelli; Sister of Christian Ortelli &The Late Amy Ortelli	Oct 6	Sep 3
David Orwan, Jr - Son of Debra Orwan	Jul 8	Oct 5
Steven Poliquin - Son of Chris Poliquin & The Late Eva Poliquin; Grandson of Louise Mazza	Oct 8	Feb 23
Christine Rappleyes - Daughter of Wendy Meixell	Oct 12	Nov 20
Deanna Renner - Daughter of Ginger Renner & The late Merle Renner	Oct 11	Oct 22
Jack Rice - Son of Jim and Vanessa Cameron	Oct 21	Aug 30
Scott Rothrock - Son of Larry and Linda Rothrock	Oct 20	Sep 18
David Uecker - Son of Susan Uecker-Bittner & The Late Phillip C. Uecker; Brother of Amanda Uecker-Miernicki	Aug 2	Oct 3
Gage Voorhees - Son of Caroline Schrey; Brother of Kara	Oct 23	Sep 14
Adam Wolk - Son of Michael and Sheila Wolk; Brother of Laura & Sarah Wolk	Aug 1	Oct 22



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:

Loved One

♥ Wayne and Rebecca Ortelli *Amy Beth Ortelli & Jennifer Bryant-Ortelli*

We Love You, We Miss You - You both are always in our hearts and on our minds. Mom & Dad

What are Love Gifts?

Love Gifts are heartfelt expressions of love given in memory of our precious children, family members, and friends. With no dues or fees our chapter sustains its mission through the generosity of Love Gift donations. Gifts can be made in any amount and are tax deductible. Please use the form on the last page of this newsletter and mail or bring to the meeting.

Many thanks to the following for their ongoing 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

The Grief of a Parent That Has Lost an Infant

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should that child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for the parents. No parent ever expects to outlive his child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

SHAME & GUILT - especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.

NO MEMORIES - Parents may only have "souvenirs of an occasion" (birth certificate, I.D. bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they may still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.

LONELINESS IN GRIEF - It is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is a newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily over a non-person. They hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."

NEGLECTED FATHERS - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.

MOTHERS vs. FATHERS - Since the mother has bonded with her child all during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

*Claire McGaughey & Sue Shelley
Infant Group TCF St. Louis, MO*

Please don't Tell Them You Never Got to Know Me

from When Hello Means Goodbye by Pat Schwiebert

It is I whose kicks you will always remember,
I who gave you heartburn that a dragon would envy,
I who couldn't seem to tell time and got your days and nights mixed up.
It is I who acknowledged your craving for peach ice cream
by knocking the cold bowl off your belly.
I who sent you shopping and helped you pick out the "perfect" teddy bear for me.
I who liked to be cradled in your belly by the fire.
It is I who never had a doubt about your love,
And I who was able to put a lifetime of joy into an instant.

*Sometimes love is for a moment,
Sometimes love is for a lifetime,
Sometimes a moment is a lifetime.*

Pamela S. Adams TCF Winnipeg, Canada

(Continued from page 2)

was a meeting every week. Everyone is different.

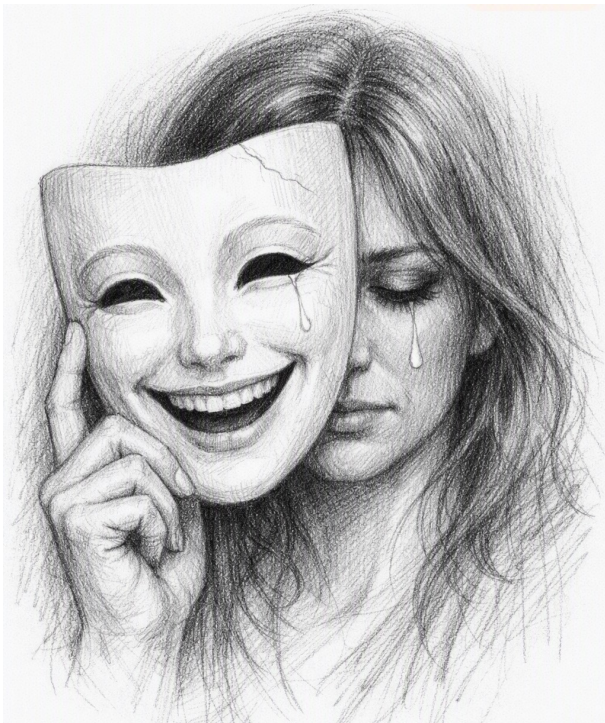
Those of us who continue to participate, sometimes for a year. Sometimes forever, slowly discover what makes TCF work for us. First, it's good to know you're not losing your mind even though it may feel like it. It's strangely comforting to know that others understand your confusion and face similar difficulties. Sharing our own stories and listening to the stories of others ease the isolation. That many bereaved families experience. As the months pass, we learn that while the experience of grief has some universal components, each of us will grieve as individuals with our own timetable. Many of us who thought grieving had a distinct beginning and end, with definable stages along the way, find that our theory doesn't make much sense in the real world. Grief is more like love; loud at times, quiet at others, with a truth that

can and will live on forever.

One day we look at the parent who cries for the daughter who died 10 years ago with a new understanding. His everyday life is no longer eclipsed by pain; we visit with him regularly at the coffee table. But TCF is the place he can bring his memories and his grief and talk about the child he will always miss and love. The thought that we, too, may want to be involved with TCF for many years does not seem as frightening as it did those first months we hesitated before walking in the door.

It isn't easy getting here, of course. But we don't hesitate anymore. We unlock the door and stand there hoping that they and we - need not walk alone.

*Mary Clark,
TCE Sugar Land, TX*



Hiding behind the Mask

I think we as bereaved parents wear masks 12 months out of the year, not just on Halloween....perhaps on Halloween we should just wear our own grief stricken face and not be noticed.

How many masks do you wear even in a week or a day. Do you wake up in the morning feeling the pain, with the knowledge that your child is no longer here? Do you "mask" that face with your old normal face to say good morning to your spouse? You can take the mask off and cry in the shower....it somehow feels so good to release some of those tears. Time to wake the children for school, put on the cheerful, positive mom mask. After dropping the children off at school you can once again remove the mask and feel. Soon you will be pulling into the parking lot at work....get the next mask out...the most of the competent professional. WOW! That's a lot of mask changing in a short time.

Strange isn't it how the MONSTER pain of grief makes us put on masks to cover the pain often to those who really care and

who perhaps are putting on their masks to cover their pain when they see us.

Maybe we could all be so much better off if we removed our masks and let the monster pain out.

lovingly lifted from Bereaved Parents USA/Orange County

Incongruities

Thoughts of you can
bring a smile to my face
...and tears to my eyes.

Memories of you tug
at my heart filling
it with love...and longing.

I feel so thankful
for having had you in my life
...and yet so sad that you are gone.
I'm comforted by the sense of your
presence surrounding me at times
...while loneliness overwhelms me.

My life is filled with incongruities:
they assure me I am healing
...and that I never will.

Gayle Block
TCF Baytown, Texas

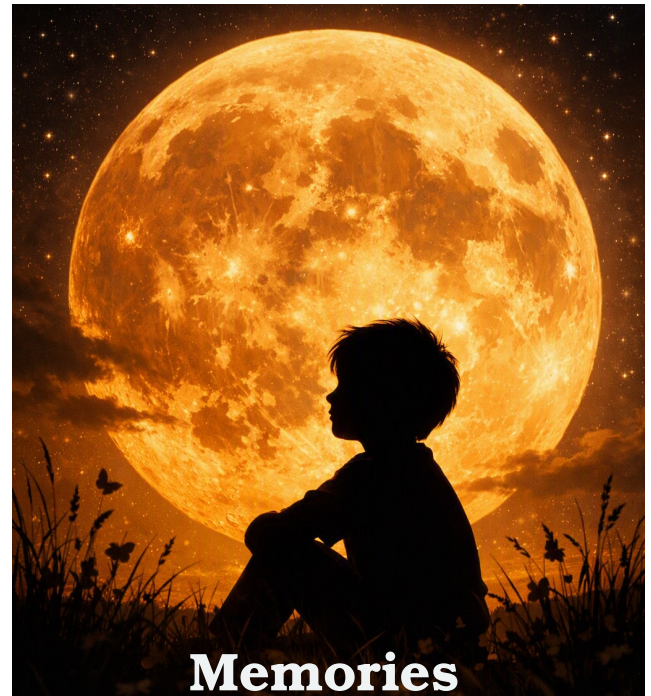


Love Never Goes Away

Does it help to know that if we didn't
love so very much, it would not hurt
so badly? Grief is the price we pay
for love. And as much as it hurts,
I'm very, very glad I loved! Don't let
death cast ugly shadows but rather
warm memories of the loving times
you shared.

Even though death comes, LOVE
NEVER GOES AWAY !!

Darcie Sims



Tonight I saw
your silhouette
Against a harvest moon...

Tonight I heard
a sweet refrain
Of some long remembered tune.

Could it be
you know somehow
How my heart remembers you?

In harvest moons
and heartfelt tunes
The memories ever true.

Where do they go
when the moon fades away
And the music can no longer be?

Far, far away
to a wandering star
That only the heart can see.

Kelly Marston
TCF Grand Junction, CO

Sibling Page

An Essay on Love

Many things have affected my life during my short seventeen years. I have seen myself undergo several changes, and pass through different stages. However, the event that, without a doubt, has had the most profound effect on my life, was the death of my brother Doug on July 23rd. Because of this, I find myself to be a completely different person than I ever imagined I would be, and my entire outlook on life has changed.

At the time of Doug's death, he was only at the young age of 19. I was only five years younger at 14. Because I was at the age when I began to share many of the same interests as him, we had become closer than we had ever been. The memories of our playful wrestling-matches, and frequent games of softball or basketball, are forever implanted in my mind. He was more than just my brother; he was truly my best friend. There were so many things that I wanted to do with him, or anticipated to see him accomplish, and it all seems so unfair that he had to slip away just when we realized our special relationship.

Since Doug's death, I have come to realizations that some people take years to come to, and those that some people never will. The most important of these is that we must cherish every moment we have with those we love, because nobody is promised to be alive when they wake up. This may seem drastic, however, when I woke up at 1 in the morning and found out my brother was gone, it seemed anything but drastic. Looking back, I wish I could change words I spoke to him, and actions, which at the time seemed harmless. The only thing in life that I feel is necessary for everyone to learn is how to love without limits, and to appreciate what we have.

It has taken me much time, and many tears to accept this tragedy which has been placed so suddenly in my life. I fear, however, that I would never have been who I am now if the one I so dearly cherished had not fallen into God's

grace. It is sad to realize that sometimes only a tragedy can change a person's heart forever.

Kari Brown, TCF Warrington, PA

#1 BROTHER

I've been wanting to write these words for so long
 But found it hard to say what I was feeling.
 Besides loneliness and feelings of forlorn,
 There's this missing piece in my life,
 A space in my heart
 That I know time can never heal.
 Some days when I'm thinking of you
 A smile comes easy.
 Other days, like today,
 It's my tears that fall like the rain.
 I'm missing you so much, big brother.
 I look for you in the face of a crowd.
 I search to find resemblance anywhere, in anyone,
 Hoping that seeing that slight
 Resemblance will numb the pain
 At least for a while,
 Maybe take away the ache in my heart
 And put that smile back on my face.
 I know you're watching out for me,
 And I know you're with me.
 And until the day when we are with each other,
 I'll have to learn to live with the memories
 And continue to search for your face in the crowd.

Suzanne Hemenway, TCF Montgomery

Note:

Siblings (age 16+) are welcome to attend our compassionate friends meetings.

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 Quakertown - 267-379-0429

TCF Easton - 610-577-5193

TCF Pocono - 570-350-6695

GRASP - 484-788-9440

(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

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 message & signature (Examples Messages - Happy Birthday; Loved & missed forever, Always in my heart Signatures - Love Mom, Dad etc.)

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

☐ Newsletter

☐ Postage

☐ Office Expenses

☐ Special Events