



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



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November

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 - November 9
- Monday - December 14 - Remembrance Program

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

Newsletter Editor Contact

• by mail:

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Chapter & Meeting News

Please Note: We recently mailed newsletter renewal forms to members who have not been active with our chapter during the past two years, such as attending meetings, contacting the chapter, or making a Love Gift. If you received a renewal letter and would like to remain on our mailing list, please contact us at 835-201-4606 by phone or text.

Meeting

7 members attended the October meeting. We hope that everyone found some encouragement at the meeting.

And For This I Give Thanks

I am acutely aware that autumn is here. As I write this, the air coming through my window is crisper and the leaves are taking on the golden and scarlet hues of the season. The shorts and tee shirts, which were the summer mainstay of the neighborhood children, are being replaced by sweats and flannels. Pumpkins are replacing pink flamingos as lawn ornaments. The beauty of nature is at its most spectacular. It is unmistakably here, welcome or not...

This will be my fifth autumn, to be followed by my fifth holiday season without my daughter Nina. I find that I am far enough along in my grief to find memories to smile about now, but still close enough to remember those first few years and the piercing stab of pain in my heart that went along with them. Halloween, with memories of the costume party she threw when she was 10 years old, the major production she made out of what she would wear as a trick-or-treater, and as she got older, her enjoyment in passing out candy to neighborhood goblins. Then came Thanksgiving, one of my favorites. I liked the idea of family and friends gathering together with no other purposes other than eating until you nearly exploded and being thankful for each other and the blessings of the past year. No presents required, just the joy of family togetherness - and the knowledge that my children were here, all of them. On that first Thanksgiving the empty chair and place at the table seemed to scream out at me that some one precious was missing. And the message of this particular holiday was thankfulness? What on earth could I ever find to be thankful for?

Some TCF parents have memories of being unable to choke down any morsel of food because they were continually trying to choke back tears that first Thanksgiving. Just wanting to curl up in a ball, pull the covers over their heads, and wake up some time in January after the last remnants of the holidays were cleared away. In all honesty, I cannot tell you even one detail of that first one: where I spent it, who was present, where I was, if I cried all day. I remember nothing.

I do remember three months after Nina had died, though. On a visit to my neurologist I tearfully told him of my depression over her death. His response to me was "Why don't you count your blessings rather than your sorrows? Think happy thoughts and maybe you won't feel so sad." I, of course, asked him if he had ever lost a child. He had not obviously. Only

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Remembered November Birthdays and Anniversaries

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

	Birth	Anniv.
Christopher Brunner - Son of Cynthia Kern; Son of Cynthia Kern	Nov 29	Mar 20
Christopher Daud - Son of Marie Daud	Nov 4	Sep 16
Michael Geiger - Son of George & Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne, Terrance, David, Timothy & The late Sgt. Christopher Geiger	Dec 31	Nov 9
Chelsie Graham - Daughter of Chris & Debbie Graham	Sep 18	Nov 2
Jill Harris - Daughter of Pat Andrew & The Late Fred Andrew; Sister of Jeff	Nov 5	Jun 28
Ty Kokolus - Son of Rita Kokolus	Nov 22	Apr 8
Michael Leh - Son of Jeneane Leh; Brother of Dayna & Samantha Leh	Nov 11	Aug 19
Joseph Lestishock - Son of Marjorie Lestishock	Aug 30	Nov 2
Emma McNulty - Daughter of Jessica & Susan Katzbeck	Nov 19	Mar 11
Jacob Miller - Son of William R & Caroline P Miller	Nov 15	Nov 16
Jonathan Miller - Son of Stacy Miller	Aug 22	Nov 13
Marissa Monteverde - Daughter of Nadine Monteverde; Sister of Tanya & Jeremy	Jan 23	Nov 4
PJ Pfenning - Son of Maureen Pfenning	Aug 30	Nov 5
Timothy Printz - Son of Matt & Claire Printz; Brother of Wendy, Micah, Calvin & David	Nov 6	Nov 6
Christine Rappleyes - Daughter of Wendy Meixell	Oct 12	Nov 20
Jason Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh	Aug 25	Nov 13
Heidi Schlenzig - Daughter of Tom & Janice Byrne	Nov 9	Aug 7
Dean Schuler - Son of Betty Schuler & the late Lester Schuler	May 22	Nov 19
Leo Shiner - Grandson of Morris & Maggie Shiner	Nov 23	Sep 8
Anthony Sisonick - Son of Rella Sisonick Daniels; Brother of Nicholas Sisonick	Nov 8	Aug 27
Matthew Solderitch - Son of Brenda Solderitch & Late Stephen Solderitch Sr.; Brother of Tina Saginario	Nov 24	Nov 3
Weston Weiant - Son of Madeline Weiant	Nov 24	Nov 24
Gilbert Weiss - Brother of Ginger Renner	Nov 17	May 13
Emma Werner - Daughter of Samantha Behler; Sister of Skylar Werner & Lonnie Behler, III	Dec 15	Nov 1
Christopher Williamson - Son of Chris & Kim Williamson; Brother of the late Christina Joy Williamson	Nov 12	Nov 12



Thank You for your "Love Gifts"



From:	Loved One
♥ Jim & Lisa Schneck	Lauren Lynn Schneck <i>Missing our forever 5 sweet girl. All our love, Mom & Dad</i>
♥ Pat Andrew	Jill Patricia Harris <i>Happy Birthday, Jill Love and Miss You and Pops. Love, Mom, Jeff, Sam & Alex</i>
♥ Lucille Radocha	Peter A. Radocha <i>In Loving Memory</i>
♥ Marie Daud	Christopher M. Daud & Courtney Daud <i>In Loving Memory</i>

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.

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someone uneducated in the school of grief would say something like that..

Almost five Thanksgiving's later, have I found reasons to be thankful? I asked myself this question and decided to put pen to paper. I was surprised to say the list was quite lengthy, so I will only share a few of them. I am thankful for:

-My loving family, and the welcomed joyful additions in the last few years. - My memory, because now the painful memories are, more often than not, replaced with the beautiful memories of the past, and they were such beautiful memories. -

-My life, for whom else will keep Nina's memory alive? Of course, my family, but they have lives, as they should. I am the self-appointed keeper of my daughter's memory. Nina. The joy of loving her, the privilege of being her mother. Though I wish it had been much longer, I wouldn't trade those 15 1/2 years for anything.

-Smiling a genuine smile, laughing a hardy laugh, and finding my sense of humor again. I sincerely believe that Nina likes to hear me laugh and that she would want me to find humor in life again.

-My sight, because I commented (for the first time in five autumns) on the magnificent colors of the autumn foliage and the grandness of Minnesota's most sumptuous season. I didn't think I'd ever notice again. But I did.

-The Compassionate Friends, who showed me there is life after the death of a child; who allowed me to express my emotions, listened patiently, understood my pain, and welcomed me into their hearts. They helped salvage what remained of my sanity and I will be eternally grateful.

-The opportunity to give back, through TCF meetings and this newsletter. To bring hope to the newly bereaved in the knowledge that it won't always hurt this bad, and that you will make it with the love and support of family and your Compassionate Friends. And, that there will come a time that you too will find things to be thankful for again.

I am told, by those who know, that peace and acceptance are that light we are searching for at the end of the tunnel. Though I find myself still looking for it at times, those further down the grief road have reassured me it will come. Maybe not this Thanksgiving or next, but that it will. And I believe them.

Cathy Seehuetter TCF St. Paul, MN

One November Day

Everything we do; Changes
Our life in some way,
This happened to me
One November day,
That's when I had
My son; You see,
It was a joyful
Time for me,
As time went on
And years went by,
He became his own person
A wonderful guy.

Those who knew Him
Loved Him so much,
It amazes me;
All the lives He touched,
For those of you; That
He never met,
He is one person; You'd
Never Forget,
He's in God's Hands
For He passed away,
But I'll always remember
That one November Day.

Sherry Brown, TCF Lehigh Valley

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

Geese and Grieving...Lessons we can Learn

I recently observed a formation of geese flying overhead, and as I watched them fly in their formation, I came to realize that they have lessons to teach us about grief.

The first lesson is related to the V formation in which geese fly. By flying in a V formation an uplift is created for the bird immediately following, and enables the whole flock to have at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone. When we are grieving, we don't have to handle our grief alone. By allowing others to help us we can handle our grief experience a little easier, knowing that others understand the pain or our loss. It helps "normalize" the experience.

The second lesson geese teach us about grief is that when a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation. Knowing that we are not the only ones dealing with grief can help us find a sense of understanding and support. The burden of trying to "go it alone" can be overwhelming. In addition to allowing family and friends to help us along our grief journey, there are support groups that can help us find strength for the "journey" of grief.

The third lesson the geese teach us relates to sharing responsibilities. When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Sometimes we need to step back and allow others to help us with our responsibilities. Grief work is hard work, and sometimes we have to let go of things in order to deal with our grief. Sometimes we may feel like we are alone in our grief, but when we listen closely, we may be able to hear the support of others who want to help - if we allow them.

And the last lesson we can learn is that when a goose gets sick or is wounded and falls out of formation, two other geese will fall out with that goose and follow it down and lend help and protection. We need to offer that type of support to those who are grieving the death of a loved one. Be concrete with offers of help rather than "Call me if I can do anything." Offer assistance with yard work, banking, cleaning, meals, etc. Don't be afraid to be with those who are grieving; they need our support. It is during this time that we need to stand by each other.



Jan Borgman, Cincinnati, OH

Colors



*Leaves of gold and Autumn hue
Soft brisk winds bring thoughts of you
Tumbling and tossing around in my head
You're still alive, you are not dead.*



*You live in the wind and in the sky
You live in my heart and you'll never die
You live in the colors you'll never see
As long as there's life... You'll always be.*

Barb Williams, TCF Fort Wayne, IN

A Thought as we Near Thanksgiving



*I'm thankful, Lord,
for loving care;*

*I'm thankful, too,
for something more;*

*I'm thankful, Lord,
that I can bear*

*The things that
I'm not thankful for.*

Claire Sanford, TCF Logansport, IN



Some Thanksgiving Suggestions

By Diane Zamkoff, TCF Simi Valley, CA

Through our lives, expectations of things to come are based upon past experiences.

If in the past, you had set a glorious table and were the perfect host or hostess, it is very possible that friends and family will expect more of the same this year.

They may not be aware that you are not looking toward the holidays with a fun and games attitude. They probably do not know that in anticipation of Thanksgiving, Chanukah, and Christmas, you may feel anxiety and fear.

They are probably thinking this year will be different and some sadness will accompany it, but I don't think they are aware of your anguish, especially if it has "been awhile."

I would suggest that in fairness to yourself you need to be honest about your feelings and, just as important, you need to communicate those feelings to those around you. I really don't think it is necessary for you to believe that because you set a tradition and always made the turkey, fried the latkes, and always had the family over, that you need to feel obligated to do it all again this year. Perhaps you would like to tell everyone:

- ☞ Someone else will have to make the dinner this year.
- ☞ You want to make dinner in your home, but you need lots of help because you don't have the energy to do it alone.
- ☞ You want to go to the parties but you are afraid you may break down and cry; you want them to know in advance that this is really okay.
- ☞ You want to tell them it's okay to talk about your child - it won't make you uncomfortable.

The list goes on, but the point is that to pretend everything is "just fine" is a lie, and that's not fair to you or to the people who love you.



They Did Their Share

On Veteran's Day we honor
Soldiers who protect our nation.
For their service as our warriors,
They deserve our admiration.

Some of them were drafted;
Some were volunteers;
For some it was just yesterday;
For some it's been many years;

In the jungle or the desert,
On land or on the sea,
They did whatever was assigned
To prove a victory.

Some came back; some didn't.
They defended us everywhere.
Some saw combat; some rode a desk;
All of them did their share.

No matter what the duty,
For low pay and little glory,
These soldiers gave up normal lives,
For duties mundane and gory.

Let every veteran be honored;
Don't let politics get in the way.
Without them, freedom would have died;
What they did, we can't repay.

We owe so much to them,
Who kept us safe from terror,
So when we see a uniform,
Let's say "thank you" to every wearer.

By Joanna Fuchs

Posted on: www.poemsource.com

Sibling Page

Please Don't Discount Sibling Grief

I have come to think of sibling grief as "Discount Grief." Why? Because siblings appear to be an emotional bargain in most people's eyes. People worry so much about the bereaved parents that they invest very little attention in the grieving sibling.

My personal "favorite" comforting line said to siblings is "You be sure and take care of your parents." I wanted to know who was supposed to take care of me — I knew I couldn't.

The grief of a sibling may differ from that of a parent, but it ought not be discounted. People need to realize that while it is obviously painful for parents to have lost a child, it is also painful for the sibling, who has not only lost a sister or brother, but an irreplaceable friend.

While dealing with this double loss, he or she must confront yet another factor: The loss of a brother or sister is frequently the surviving sibling's first experience with death of any young person. Young people feel they will live forever. A strong dose of mortality in the form of a sibling death is very hard to take.

The feelings of the siblings are often discounted when decisions are being made - on things ranging from funeral plans to flower selections. Parents need to listen to surviving siblings who usually know a lot about the tastes and preferences of the deceased.

Drawing on the knowledge that surviving siblings have about supposedly trivial things - such as favorite clothes or music - can serve two purposes when planning a funeral or memorial services. First their input helps ensure that the deceased receives the type of service he or she would have liked. Second, their inclusion in the planning lets them know they are still an important part of the family.

I realize that people are unaware that they are discounting sibling grief. But then, that's why I'm writing this - so people will know.

Jane Marchado, TCF, Atlanta, GA

One More Day

If I were granted one more day
To spend alone with you,
I'd say the things I should have said
And do all I wanted to do.

I'd tell you that I love you.
Did I tell you that before?
Or did I just take it for granted
That you'd always walk through the door?

I'd play all the games you asked me to play
But I was too busy, you see.
I'm sorry for the times I wasn't there,
Now, I wish you were here for me.

I'd tell you I miss you so very much.
You've been gone forever, it seems,
And I still hope that one of these days
I'll wake from this terrible dream.

If one more day were given to me
To tell you the things I'd say,
The only thing I'd want after that,
Would be just one more day.

Crystal Gibb,

Bereavement Magazine, January 1991

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

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 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