



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Serving Upper Bucks and Montgomery Counties December 2016

Quakertown Chapter
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The Compassionate Friends is a nationally renowned 501 C (3) non-profit organization with 700 chapters in the US. All donations are tax deductible.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends: 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.



Advent: Preparing for Christmas by Gail Blase

Ugh! Four years ago, after the death of our daughter, Katey, that was the last thing I wanted to do! Sending cards, decorating, shopping, wrapping presents, listening to holiday songs on the radio and in the stores, and hearing "Merry Christmas", all really bothered me. I just wanted Christmas to be over!

I was just too tired. Grief takes a lot out of you. How could the holidays ever be the same again? My whole life seemed to be engulfed in sadness.

At Compassionate Friends, members said just do what you want to do and if nothing, that's ok and don't feel you have to apologize to anyone. So that's what I did or didn't do. I didn't send cards, I didn't decorate the house, no lights, no tree, no shopping! I still attended church and even a "Blue Christmas" service for

those who have suffered a loss. I still taught Sunday School and helped with the children's pageant, so I tried to keep my happy face through my tears.

The second Christmas was much the same. In fact, my sisters took me away for part of the holiday but I missed the kids' pageant and I was sorry about that.

The third year, we knew a family with two children who were very needy. Santa brought them some small gifts to our house and Jack and I surprised them each with a bike. A much better Christmas!

Last year I actually enjoyed getting ready for Christmas. Important to me was helping the needy, working with the children on their Christmas pageant and giving our first grandchild, Maggie, memorable moments. She even played Jesus on Christmas Eve! What a joy!

The holidays aren't the same as they were and never will be. But as each year passes, new traditions have begun. I know Katey wants us to be happy. After all, in a dream I had four months after she died, she told me: "Look up, Look down, Look around, Look to God".

I will Katey, and we will prepare and rejoice in the birth of our Lord!

We talk. We listen. We share. We care.

Our Support Group Meetings are the 2nd Tuesday of every month at St. Luke's Quakertown Hospital, 1021 Park Ave., Quakertown, in the Taylor Conference rooms A & B on the ground floor of the professional wing. Meetings are 7:30 - 9 PM. No need to register. No fees or dues. Just come as you are.

Self-help Program

The Compassionate Friends, Inc. is a mutual assistance, self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child of any age, from any cause is welcome. Our meetings give parents an opportunity to talk about their child and about their feelings as they go through the grieving process. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership dues. The purpose of this support group is not to focus on the cause of death or the age of the child, as it is to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with the feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child.

To Our New Members

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain!. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right words said that will help you in your grief work.

To our Members who are further down the "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. THINK BACK - what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF"veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"

Information Regarding Our Meetings

PLEASE don't stay away from a meeting because the topic scheduled does not interest you. We are here to discuss whatever is on your mind, we don't stay on the topic only. This is YOUR group and we are here for each other. You do not have to talk at meetings. We welcome your participation in our group but it is not a requirement. Coming to listen to the others is Okay too. Remember also that our meeting is open to adult siblings, grandparents, or adult family members such as aunts or uncles.

Support Group Meetings

We are so sorry for the cause that brings us together. It takes courage to attend a Compassionate Friends support group meeting. We understand how it feels to walk into a room of strangers and share personal feelings, especially when you are in so much pain. At your first meeting, we hope you find care, support, understanding and a group of friends to share with. Truly, there are no strangers among compassionate friends.

As a reminder to families that would like to attend a support meeting. Please allow yourself at least 3 or 4 meetings of attendance to determine if they are for you. It may take a few meetings before you are able to talk about your loved one and that is understandable. What you say at our meetings is kept in the meeting, you can cry, hug, talk about how you are feeling freely. Our meetings are for parents, grandparents and siblings in grade 9 or above and adult siblings.

Your Friends at TCF Quakertown Chapter

Library Books

We have a nice library of books for our members to check out and read and return them back to our library. A problem

we currently have is that some books have not made their way back to our library and our library is shrinking. If you have checked out a book or magazine from our library and are done reading it won't you PLEASE return it to us at our monthly meetings. If you are not able to make the meeting you may mail it back to us or have someone else return it to us. Also, if you have any books that would help other grieving families through their journey and would like to donate them to our library please give them to our librarians.

Newsletter Errors and Omissions

For any errors or omissions please contact Linda via email at kt4ever@mac.com with the error and the correction for the next month newsletter.

Please remember we are all volunteers and grieving

About This Newsletter

This newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Quakertown Chapter with the hope that it will be a helpful resource for you on your grief journey.

If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter please contact the newsletter editor by email:

newsletter@tcfquakertownpa.org

PLEASE NOTE: If you are moving or your email has changed please notify the newsletter editor so that we can update your information and you continue to receive the newsletter. If the newsletter is returned to us either via mail or your email bounces back and you have not notified us you will be removed from the mailing list.

Newsletter submissions:

Submit articles and poetry to the editor by the 15th of the preceding month. Include the author's name & your contact information. You may mail to our PO Box 1013, Quakertown PA 18951 or email as a pdf file or word document to:

newsletter@tcfquakertownpa.org

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7 Things I've Learned Since the Loss of My Child

1). Love never dies.

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased children as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours—the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn't so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn't stop me from saying my son's name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn't make him matter any less. My son's life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

2). Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds—a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we've never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It's a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

3). I will grieve for a lifetime.

Period. The end. There is no "moving on," or "getting over it." There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no elixir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my

son with all my heart and soul. There will never come a time where I won't think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute over the course of a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday, milestone—should-be back-to-school school years and graduations; weddings that will never be; grandchildren that should have been but will never be born— an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered forever.

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

4). It's a club I can never leave, but is filled with the most shining souls I've ever known.

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I've ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship— that we could have met another way— any other way but this. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful,

compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers. Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining the club. If you've ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy. Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a life force to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.

5). The empty chair/room/space never becomes less





Seven things can't

empty.

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone for this lifetime. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to “move on,” or “stop dwelling,” from well intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. Gone is still gone. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains.

The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

6). No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son. Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why every holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, truly are. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children. Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two— anything— than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than living without one of more of your precious children. That is why holidays are always and forever hard for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or

even try to understand. Know you don't have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

7). Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact, though it took awhile to get there. It is not either/or, it's both/and. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve I also know a joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depth of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again— when the joy comes, however and whenever it does— it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply: the love, the grief, the joy, the pain. I embrace and thank every morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but because of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all “worth” it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say thank you, thank you, thank you. Because there is nothing— and I mean absolutely nothing— I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible.

I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given.

Even death can't take that away.

Christmas Through the Years

Your child is gone, Christmas is coming,
it is the first year

We know they are with us in our heart
and their spirit is near
Now it's the second year we still hurt so
much and still feel all alone
But it is the hardest because reality sets
in, you know they're not coming home.

Each Christmas they're not with you,
sometimes you wonder how you go on
You just don't want to believe that your
child really is gone
No one knows the pain and the sorrow
each year you go through
You try to be happy for others but so
much love is gone from you.

Then five years have gone by, you can
still feel the loneliness in your heart
You still cannot get into the Christmas
spirit, you still feel torn apart
But things get a little softer and you try to
do your best
So many who love and need you never
seem to let you rest.

Now ten years is coming up but you
cannot forget them you know
They will always be with you no matter
where you may go
You look at their picture and think of
them as each day goes by
No matter what Christmas it is you still sit
there and cry.

Christmas is here once more and you're
twenty years down the road
In your heart and your mind you still have
that heavy load
That your child should be with you at
Christmas and each holiday
They should not be in Heaven they
should have been here to stay.



Holidays in Heaven

By Dan Bryl
TCF Lawrenceville, GA
In Memory of his daughter, Jessica

The Holiday season is just not the same,
A smile is missing when saying one name.
For parents who've lost a daughter or son,
Nothing can bring back the delightful fun,
Of watching them talk, laugh, or just run.
The memories are all that we do have now,
We do go on.... Only God knows how.
A New Year comes as midnight arrives,
Our Angels still a big part of our lives,
If only we could trade the presents we receive,
For one more day with those whom we grieve!
But nothing can bring back our beloved child,
The one that laughed, cried, and often smiled.
They are together in a much better place,
Watching us cry... touching our face!
Although we miss them on Holidays to share,
Be assured their loving presence fills the air.
At home, in church, at New York's Times Square!
So celebrating the Holidays are now hard to do,
But always remember they are thinking of you, too.
Wishing you happiness and showing their love,
Not on this Earth, but from Heaven above!

Now thirty years of Christmas'
have gone by, your child will
always be with you
You do a lot of things different now
than you used to do
But you still think of all the
happiness that you used to have
each year
Your child will always be with you,
they will always be here.

No matter how many years have
gone by, their thoughts are still
there
Sometimes you wonder if they still
look the same as when they were
here
You look back on so many years
and you've kept their spirit alive
They will always be in your heart,
that is what has helped you to

survive.

As life goes on holidays get a
little softer in time
But the thoughts of your child
are always on your mind
All the memories of your son or
daughter still brings tears
You can look back on your
happiness on Christmas
through the years.

By Dee and Jack Heil
NE Philadelphia Chapter
11-7-2016



Sometimes, life is about perspective, about the lens with which we view our stories and our circumstances.

In the world of parents who have outlived their children, we have to learn quickly about perspective. In order to truly keep living after the breath has left our children's lungs, we are forced to choose the lens with which we'll see their life, their story, and our lives and our stories when everything is seemingly broken.

This world of parents who have outlived their children— it's both a heartbreaking and extraordinary world.

In it, you are in the presence of warriors, of men and women who have been given one of the most sacred tasks and missions. You are in the presence of men and women who were chosen, not chosen for pain, but chosen to be the only people in the world to parent their precious children. Parenthood, in and of itself, is a sacred task. It's true. But parenting a child, parenting children, when you can no longer reach out and touch their faces, hold them in your arms, watch them grow, that is one of the greatest, most sacred tasks you can be given.

Out of every person in this world, you were chosen to be his or her parent. Out of every person in this world, you are the ones who were chosen to know him or her, better than anyone, to be theirs, to have your souls tied together for eternity. Out of every person in this world, it was you. It is you. It always will be you.

We can choose to view our circumstances strictly through the lens of sorrow, of sadness, of pain, or we can look at it through a different lens, one that acknowledges the pain but doesn't see exclusively through it. It notices the broken places, but it holds fiercely to hope. It aches and it hurts at times, but it holds ever more tightly to purpose, to good, to redemption.

You, your children, their stories did not end. They continue to be written every single day that breath is held in your lungs. This is your sacred task.

Their story is not over. We carry them. But listen here: your story, my story, our stories are not over either. No matter how much you wished you could have stopped breathing when the breath left their lungs, no matter how hopeless your life seems, no matter how deep down in the pit anxiety or depression or PTSD have taken you. No matter how weak, how small, how fragile you may feel, you are not.

You are brave. You are fierce. You have been given a sacred task, and you are the person for the job. Your story is far, far, far from over.

Few people in this world meet someone who so intricately and radically changes their lives simply by entering it. Few people have their lives split into such a powerful before and after. And while it may be so easy to look at our before and afters through the lens of deep pain and sorrow, you have been given a sacred gift: to know a love so pure, so raw, that it extends across world, through time, and death cannot even touch it. You've been given a sacred gift, a second chance, an invitation to never be the same from this point forward simply because they existed, you were chosen to be theirs, and you are tied together, eternally, your love a force greater than life itself.

You are theirs. They are yours. For eternity. Press on.

~ by Lexi Behrndt

Scribbles & Crumbs

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you

Thank you to Rebecca Schneck in memory of her daughter Jamie. Beth Horwin in memory of her son Michael and Cindy O'Donnell in memory of her son Rourke, Carol Graham in memory of Adam, Lynette Lampman in memory of her son Shawn and Crystal Hunter in memory of Justin and Jethro for providing our November refreshments. *If you would like to sponsor refreshments or bring some in remembrance of your loved one at a meeting please call Carol Graham at 215-538-3651.*

A special thank you to Mary Ann Kulp, Nancy Eisenhart, Lynette Lampmann, Jenn Pini, Kelly Logan and Jennifer Pini for the Remembrance and Thank you cards that you receive. They do this in remembrance of their children/ siblings, son, Tony (MaryAnn), daughter, Kelly (Nancy), son, Shawn (Lynette), son, Brian (Ginny), and brother, Jason (Jennifer), Kelly does it in remembrance of all those who have gone too soon. An appreciated Thank You to our members for helping to set up and tear down for our meetings, they do this in remembrance of their children and siblings. A special thank you to St. Luke's Hospital for providing us with our meeting rooms each month.

Thank you to Linda Stauffer for doing our newsletter. She does this in memory of her daughter Katie. Thank you to, Betty and Charlie Hottenstein, for taking on the monthly task of addressing our monthly newsletters for mailing, they do this in remembrance of their daughter, Tracy..

Thank you for your Love Gifts and Support We the parents and families of the Quakertown Chapter of Compassionate Friends would like to send a special Thank You to the following donors. Without their generosity in giving to a good cause we would not be able to continue reaching out to newly bereaved parents and families with our Outreach packet and newsletters.

Love Gifts for November

Beth Horwin In Memory of her son, Michael Leach
Loved & missed everyday.

John & Anita Bardsley, In Memory of Katie Leck
Missing you everyday.

Rev. D. Craig & Anne Landis, In Memory of Marc
Loved & missed always.

James A. & Helen Geib, In Memory of James G.
Wishing you Love at Christmas & always.

Phil & Arlene Peters, In Memory of Sundai Marie Peters
We miss you everyday - Love, Mom & Dad



LOVE GIFTS

A LOVE GIFT is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child who has died; either on his/her birthday or anniversary of the death. It can also be from someone who wants to honor a friend or relative who has died, or anyone who wants to help support the work of TCF. Your LOVE GIFTS are TAX DEDUCTIBLE, and are the Chapter's main monetary support. Chapter Non-profit #2053

I wish to make a donation in memory _____ honor _____ of _____ **Birth date
_____ Death date _____

Love gift message

Please send your check payable to: TCF Quakertown Chapter and mail to: TCF Quakertown Chapter, PO Box 1013, Quakertown, PA 18951

I / We would like our Love gift to be used for: _____ Special Events /Speakers/community outreach _____ Memorial Garden
_____ Candle Lighting Program _____ Memorial Walk & Butterfly Release _____ General operating expenses

Your Name _____ email _____

Address _____

_____ Telephone _____



Our Children Remembered on their December Birthdays

John Fonsemorti, son of Rose Fonsemorti
– 12/2

Sundai Marie, daughter of Arlene & Phil
Peters – 12/3

Keven Kuestner, son of Keith & Tammy
Kuestner – 12/5

Stephen Limongelli, son of Patricia
Limongelli – 12/7

Scott Smakula, grandson of Naomi Shaw –
12/7

Laura Smith, daughter of Valerie Smith –
12/7

Ashley Doyle, daughter of Brian Doyle –
12/8

Brian Lambert, son of Richard & Alberta
Lambert – 12/8

Jason Miller, son of Phil & Pam Miller –
12/10

Arthur Ucci, brother of Joany Ucci – 12/15

Ryan Strauch, son of Dave & June Strauch
– 12/17

Christopher Dixon, son of Steve & Kim
Dixon – 12/18

Joseph Cifone III, brother of Dorothy &
Garry Neubert – 12/19

Thomas Onraet, son of Ruth & Maurice Onraet
– 12/19

Andy Walnes, daughter of Kim Walnes – 12/19

Rich Hollabaugh, son of Linda & Wayne
Hollabaugh – 12/20

Michael Fayewicz, brother of Sandra Ligowski
– 12/20

Kiana Alvarenga, daughter of Tina & Jose
Alvarenga – 12/24

Allison Fawcett, daughter of Anne & Bernie
Smith – 12/25

Richard Murphy II, son of Richard Murphy –
12/26

Bill Chapman, son of John & Carol Scheetz –
12/29



"Death ends a life,
not a relationship."

Mitch Albom

But still grief at
Christmas makes us
lonely & sad.

Our Children Remembered on the Anniversary of their death

Matthew Detweiler, son of Eleanor Detweiler –
12/2

Matthew Mikolon, brother of Lesley & Phyllis
Mikolon – 12/2

Alan Roskow, son of Nan Roskow – 12/2

Chad Liles, son of Carl Liles; Susan & John
Rowe – 12/5

Beverly Sue Otten, daughter of Mary Leuz –
12/6

Adrienne Heber, daughter of Anna & John Heber
– 12/7

Kevin Myers, son of MaryLou Nyce – 12/8

Sean A. Ryer, grandson of Diana Adams – 12/12

Nicole Rush, daughter of Harold Conrad, Sr. –
12/12

Michael Tondera, son of Maria & Steven
Tondera; brother of Yvonne Perrucci – 12/13

Robert Kyle Rainey, son of Lynne Rainey –
12/14

Finnegan Ward, son of Edmund & Carlee Ward
– 12/14

Robert Dorman, Jr., brother of Donna & Greg
Rowe – 12/15

Christopher Thomas, son-in-law of Barbara &
Eduardo Reboratti – 12/15

Robert Marich, son of Michele Callon – 12/16

Zachary Dawson, son of Roger Dawson, brother
of Jamie – 12/16

Brian Keim, son of Ronald & Joan Keim – 12/18

Dwayne Hager, son of Stanley & Ruth Hager –
12/19

Billy Savage, son of Bill & Blanche Savage,
brother of Jennifer – 12/19

James Fiorelli, son of Rosanne & Steve Fiorelli –
12/20

Jon Masso, brother of Melissa Fisher – 12/21

Russell Snyder, son of Russell & Sandra Snyder
– 12/20

Christopher Adams, son of Judy Adams – 12/22

Kim Biborosch, son of Diane Biborosch – 12/22

David Schaller, son of Raymond Schaller – 12/23

Jesse Covelens, son of Courtney Covelens –
12/24

Jesse Miskovsky, son of David & Debra
Miskovsky – 12/24

Michael Johnson, brother of Dorene Elwell –
12/25

Christopher Dixon, son of Steve & Kim Dixon –
12/27

Jeremy Gibialante, son of Kim Gibialante, brother
of Monica Shumaker – 12/27

Peter Angstadt III, son of Peter & Lynette
Angstadt – 12/29

Eric S. Moyer, son of Ray & Linda Moyer – 12/31

