



The Compassionate Friends

December 2018 *Serving Upper Bucks and Montgomery Counties*

Christmas Past, Christmas Present

As the holidays approach, most bereaved parents feel anxiety, apprehension and some little bit of fear. The past is gone along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality, of holidays without our children.

This will be my fifth Christmas without my son, Todd. It will be my fourth Christmas without his children. And yet, I find that on some small level, I am looking forward to the holiday. I imagine the Christmases of the past when Todd was growing up and after he started his family. I also imagine Christmases of the future where Todd's children share in the traditions that their Dad so dearly loved. But that won't happen. I have come to accept that wives and children go on with their lives. I have come to accept that my son's children will not be a part of their father's family, his heritage or his legacy. That is the reality.

But I have also found that wonderful people can help make the holiday special. I do very little at Christmas. Some shopping.... most of it on the Internet, a little in local stores. I send cash to my son's children. I don't know who or what they are these days, but cash is far better than something that has no significance to them. I do get pleasure in few things. I buy small toiletries for nursing home residents. I buy a gift for my dad's sister who is now 88. I buy for my mom's sister, my cousin, her husband and her daughter. I buy for my best friend. That's enough buying. My husband and I decide whether we want something special for the two of us and, if so, we buy it. Otherwise, we skip the gift giving. We won't be decorating this year, but we haven't decorated for five years.

We have changed our traditions....traditions that Todd loved so much. It is simply too painful to do this alone. We spend time with my family and a few friends. We marvel at the wonder that is Christmas for

children. John and my aunt cook and my cousin, her daughter and I clean up in the big country kitchen of my cousin's home. Gifts are exchanged. There is no Christmas tree, but the three acres in front of the house are decorated with all kinds of lights and lighted figures. Santa and his reindeer are in the front garden, close to the road. Angels, reindeer and more gather in the west pasture and front yard. The house is framed in lights. It's quite lovely. For me that is enough.

Christmas will never be what it once was, but I no longer dread the holidays as I once did. Some of my Compassionate Friends have returned to old traditions with their surviving children and maybe even with grandchildren. Each of us learns to deal with Christmas in our own way. Each year I am a different person with a new perspective on the holidays. Next year I may decide to skip it all or immerse myself in the season. My truth is ever changing.

(continued on page 5)

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.



World Wide Candle Lighting Dec 9 at 7:00 at First UCC Church Quakertown

Next meetings: Dec 11, January 8

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.

Quakertown Chapter

PO Box 1013

Quakertown, PA 18951

Chapter Info Line: 484-408-7314

contact@TCFQuakertownpa.org

website: www.tcfquakertownpa.org

It has been said that time heals all wounds. I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time the mind, protecting its sanity, covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but it's never gone. ~ Rose Kennedy



The Compassionate Friends

Quakertown Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Serving Bucks and Montgomery Counties



About Our Chapter

Ginny Leigh-Manuell, Chapter Leader
Crystal Hunter, Chapter Treasurer
Gail Blase, Chapter Secretary
Mary Anne Macko, Assistant Secretary
Linda Stauffer, Chapter Newsletter & Website
Lynette Lampmann, Memorial Garden Director & Remembrance Cards
Theresa Sitko, Chapter Librarian
Barbara Reboratti, Chapter Delegate
Carol Graham, Hospitality
Mary Catherine Niderostek
Brittini Fonder, Remembrance Cards
Celeste Nice, Outreach
Sheri Albro
Bob Albro

TCF National Office:

877-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

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



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

OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED for December

Loved...Missed...Remembered on their
Birthdays and Always

December Birthdays

12/2 - John Fonsemorti, son of Rose Fonsemorti

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

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

12/7 - Scott Smakula, grandson of Naomi Shaw

12/7 - Laura Smith, daughter of Valerie Smith

12/8 - Ashley Doyle, daughter of Brian Doyle

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

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

12/15 - Arthur Ucci, brother of Joan Ucci

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

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

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

12/19 - Andy Walnes, daughter of Kim Walnes

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

12/20 - Michael Fayewicz, brother of Sandra Ligowski

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

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

Only December

Feelings heavy,
tears and tears.
Will the darkness last?
Or is it –
only December?

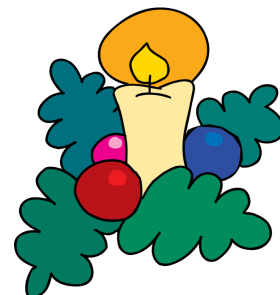
Hadn't past months
brought peace and hope?
Where is the strength
of October –
and November?

Lights, carols, ornaments on trees,
cards from friends,
happy times in seasons past.
We remember.
We remember.

Will January bring
light at last?
Will we be stronger then,
for making it through
this December?

When people ask
how I'm doing I say,
Well . . . you know . . .
it's December.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from *Stars in the Deepest Night- After the
Death of a Child*



OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED FOR December

Our Beloved Children...In Our Hearts Always...Remembered on the
Remembrance Day of their Death

- 
- 12/2 – Matthew Detweiler**, son of Eleanor Detweiler; brother of Lesley & Phyllis Mikolon
- 12/2 – Alan Roskow**, son of Nan Roskow
- 12/5 – Chad Liles**, son of Carl Liles; Susan & John Rowe
- 12/6 – Beverly Sue Otten**, daughter of Mary Leuz
- 12/7 – Adrienne Heber**, daughter of Anna & John Heber
- 12/8 – Kevin Myers**, son of MaryLou Nyce
- 12/12 – Sean A. Ryer**, son of Pat Ryer; grandson of Diana Adams
- 12/12 – Nicole Rush**, daughter of Harold Conrad, Sr.
- 12/13 – Sean Dawson**, son of Roger & Becky Dawson
- 12/13 – Michael Tondera**, son of Maria & Steven Tondera; brother of Yvonne Perrucci
- 12/14 – Robert Kyle Rainey**, son of Lynne Rainey
- 12/14 – Finnegan Ward**, son of Carlee & Edmund Ward, Jr.
- 12/15 – Christopher Thomas**, son-in-law of Barbara & Eduardo Reboratti
- 12/15 – Robert Dorman, Jr.**, brother of Donna & Greg Rowe
- 12/16 – Robert Marich**, son of Michele Callon
- 12/16 – Zachary Dawson**, son of Roger & Becky Dawson
- 12/17 – Joseph Vincente**, son of Christine & Donald Vincente
- 12/18 – Brian Keim**, son of Ronald & Joan Keim
- 12/19 – Dwayne Hager**, son of Ruth & Stanley Hager, Jr.
- 12/19 – Billy Savage**, son Bill & Blanche Savage; brother of Jennifer
- 12/20 – James Fiorelli**, son of Steve & Roseanne Fiorelli
- 12/20 – Russell Snyder, Jr.**, son of Sandra & Russell Snyder, Sr.
- 12/21 – Jon Masso**, brother of Melissa Fisher
- 12/21 – Jacquelyn Dahms**, daughter of Don Croisette
- 12/22 – Kim Biborosch**, daughter of Diane Biborosch
- 12/23 – David Schaller**, son of Raymond Schaller
- 12/24 – Jesse Miskovsky**, son of David & Debra Miskovsky; brother of Courtney Covelens
- 12/25 – Amber Eisenstein**, daughter of Ben Eisenstein
- 12/25 – Michael Johnson**, son of David & Donna Freeman; brother of Dorene Elwell
- 12/27 – Christopher Dixon**, son of Steve & Kim Dixon
- 12/27 – Jeremy Gibialante**, son of Kim Gibialante; brother of Monica Shumaker
- 12/29 – Peter Angstadt III**, son of Lynette & Peter Angstadt

Memorial Garden Update



(continued from page 1)

Find what is right for you. Pressures from others mean nothing. You choose whether a celebration is in order. You choose how to celebrate. You choose the old traditions or you choose some new ones.....maybe you choose nothing and decide to go with the flow of the moment. As bereaved parents, you will always remember your child at Christmas, but as the years add up and grief starts to release its grip on your soul, you may find that you can keep your child in your heart and have room for the spirit of Christmas as well.

The holidays do get better. Life does get better. The days will gradually become softer and sweeter. The nights will ease into gentleness. Friendships will again have luster, and relationships will become deeper and more meaningful. That is the future for each of us. The present is driven by where we are in our grief. So for this and every Christmas Holiday season, be who you are and mark the day as you choose.

May we all have serenity throughout the Holiday season and in the years ahead.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

This has been a very successful year for the garden thanks to the many volunteers who have graciously given their time to plant and maintain the garden. The garden plan has basically been completed with the last of the perennials planted this fall. We are awaiting approval from West Rockhill Township for the drip irrigation system we hope to install. This will make for more consistent even watering and conserve water with the application of the rain gauge sensor. Many thanks to all volunteers who did the watering all season long.

As we draw to a close of this year I wish to announce that I will be stepping down as chairman of the garden committee on

December 31st of 2018. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. To see a paper sketch go from a flat field to a beautiful memorial garden has been an incredibly amazing experience. There are a lot of very generous people in the world. These volunteers gave time, energy, and financial aid to make this garden happen. Please know that I am forever in your debt for being there in all kinds of weather giving your all to see this garden materialize. It has been a privilege and an honor to walk alongside of you and I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart. Your new chairman of the garden committee will be Theresa Sitko, who very graciously volunteered to replace me. She is very knowledgeable and has been there from the beginning. I ask that you give her the same support that you gave me. The garden is a living entity so there will be continuous maintenance and planting of annuals and spring mulching.

Enclosing I wish you all a holiday season and New Year filled with love, peace and hope and less pain.

Many thanks,

Lynette Lampmann

Christmas Without My Child

Last night we held our Compassionate Friends chapter meeting for November: the topic was Holidays and Grief. We met in small groups to discuss how we are going to get through this most difficult of times. While we found no single answer, we did make some discoveries about ourselves. We also found some basic ways to take control of our lives.

In our group of eleven were several newly bereaved parents. Deep sorrow and anxiety were apparent in each face as we opened the dialogue –a discussion of the holiday season without their children. This anxiety and deep sorrow immediately became mine; I am that parent, I am still on the first leg of what may be a long journey without my child. Their tears were mine as we talked.

As the discussion progressed, I could see a bit of each parent's tension slowly release. I felt as if I could read their minds: give me some answers, tell me I will survive this, tell me how you did it. The answers were all different; the reassurances of parents who had lost their child and survived that first heartbreaking holiday were there. Some of the answers came from the newly bereaved as they explored their inner feelings.

We found consensus on one important factor: we must give ourselves permission to do what makes us most comfortable. We are not the caretakers to the world right now; we must take care of ourselves. If established traditions bother us, then we must turn to something else. What is the point of pouring salt into this open wound? Perhaps next year or the year after, when the wound is not so fresh, we will want to return to former traditions. Perhaps not.

Through tears and some light laughter, we realized that we are not invincible. We are not responsible for the happiness of friends and extended family. We do not have to meet the expectations of others. We must accept our emotional limitations and the psychological and physical toll that grief takes on us. We must slow down and change our perspective. We must do what is right for us, especially during the holidays.

Most of those who had been through at least one holiday season without their child felt that making changes for the first year or two was a positive step forward. We found that talking honestly with our family about our feelings might make them feel temporarily uncomfortable but it did clear the air about expectations. We agreed that limiting our casual social relationships negated the need to make explanations regarding our lack of interest in holiday celebrations. By “dropping out” we also eliminated obligations in many areas. This gives us the freedom to choose simplicity over stress, essentials over hassles and flexibility over anxiety. This gives us the opportunity to live in the moment, go where our emotions take us and listen to our hearts.

While we all agreed that the holidays are overwhelming for parents whose children have died, we also agreed that we are each individuals and we each perceive the world differently. Some of us want and need the old traditions during the holiday season. Some of us need to be with people who are not part of our grieving process. Others among us felt that solitude and simplicity were the answer.

The answer to the question of how we get through the holidays is found within each one of us. We each have our own truth. The challenge, we decided, is to honor that truth and hold the line against external pressures. A few of our newly bereaved parents could barely choke out a word or two. Others were more vocal. While grief consumes some of us for many, many years, others appear to “go with the flow” of life very early in their grief. What feels right for one of us may be abhorrent to someone else.

One universal truth did emerge from our conversations: we miss our beautiful children and love them as deeply as when they walked beside us. We live in this purgatory each day of the year, but during the holidays it seems most oppressive. Our children have been torn from our lives forever. Daily life and special traditions will always reflect the deep void that has become our reality. We need our Compassionate Friends at the holiday season. We need to know that others have walked this road, have lived this nightmare and have managed to survive. We each continue to rediscover hope through our Compassionate Friends. And in finding that hope we have given and received the purest gift of the season: the possibility of peace.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX



Due to changes to St. Luke's Hospital's Food & Beverage Service, The Compassionate Friends Quakertown Chapter will no longer be ordering hot beverages from the hospital service. We will still provide bottled water and light finger foods each month. Please bring your own coffee or tea with you. There are dispensing machines near the cafeteria if you forget.

Refreshments for November

Lincul Family - son Matthew, Lynette Lampmann - son Shawn
 Bob & Sheri Albro - son Benjamin, Mary Catherine Neiderostock - son Joshua, Ann Marie Attilio - Daniel's 30th Birthday, Diane Gurecky - son Michael, Cindy O'Donnell - son Rourke, Mary Anne Macko - brother Michael Macko

If you would like to sponsor refreshments or bring some in remembrance of your loved one at a meeting please call Mary Ann Macko 215-679-3869 .

A special thank you to Lynette Lampmann, Brittni Fonder, Jennifer Pini and Mary Catherine Neiderstock for the Remembrance cards that you receive. They do this in memory of their children/ siblings: Shawn (Lynette), brother, Jason (Jennifer) brother Christopher (Brittni) and son Josh (Mary Catherine). An appreciated Thank You to our members for helping to set up and tear down for chapter meetings. Thank you to Linda Stauffer for doing our newsletter and website. She does this in memory of her daughter Katie. Thank you to, Betty and Charlie Hottenstein for addressing our monthly newsletters for mailing. They do this in remembrance of their daughter, Tracy.

LOVE GIFTS

A Love Gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends. Love Gifts can be in memory of a child or sibling on their birthday or angel day, can honor a friend or relative, or can show support for the work of TCF. Love Gifts are the Chapter's main monetary support. Thank you for your Love Gift.

Love Gifts are tax deductible – Chapter Non-Profit #2053

Circle One: *In Memory or In Honor of* (name of persc

Birth Date _____ Death Date (Angel Day)

Check One: Please use my gift for....

- Memorial Garden
- Special Events (i.e. speakers, community outreach)
- Candle Lighting Program
- Memorial Walk & Butterfly Release
- General operating expenses

Your Name: _____

Email or Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Love Gifts

We would like to send a special Thank You to the following donors; John & Anita Bardsley in memory of their daughter Katie Leck.

.Philip & Arlene Peters in memory of daughter Sundai Marie Peters. "We miss you so much and think of you every day."

Without your generosity in giving we would not be able to continue reaching out to newly bereaved parents and families with our Outreach packet and newsletters.

Starting now, our newsletter will have a Community Corner. If you have an event that benefits bereaved Parents or siblings or you have a non-profit in memory of your child/sibling and have events, send them to us!

Katie Stauffer Memorial Fund at the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation. Scholarships to Quakertown High School students

James C Roberts IV memorial scholarship fund at East Stroudsburg University- must be involved in sports (football) and major in secondary education.

Checks payable to: TCF Quakertown Chapter

Mail to: PO Box 1013, Quakertown, PA 18951

Love Gift Message:

Treasurer Use Only
 Cash/Check # _____ Amount _____
 D _____ Q _____ T _____ N _____

