



The Compassionate Friends

March 2020

Serving Upper Bucks and Montgomery Counties

Five Lessons Grief Teaches

By Maria Housden, lecturer and author of Hannah's Gift: Lessons from a Life Fully Lived.

Twenty-two years of grief changes a lot of things. I am a new person every day. I never expected to survive my daughter's death. For months after, I prayed to die. More than once, I considered taking my own life, though I could not leave all I love here.

There is no good way or time to lose a child. When someone you love dies, everything unnecessary falls away. I have learned to see grief as a spiritual practice, and it has taught me to see life in new ways.

TRUTH: telling it and living it

My daughter Hannah died of cancer at the age of three. This is the first true moment in my human story. Everything I am begins with this. The truth of Hannah's death is fierce and unrelenting. I cannot change it, but I can change the way I

live with it.

When Hannah died, my life entered a "no drama" zone. I only had time and energy for the few things that mattered. I lost my politeness and learned to tell the truth. I let the phone ring and stopped reading fiction.

Pretending not to grieve does not make our children less dead. When tears are not seen as weakness, sorrow becomes a wise teacher. Truth changes as we change, and it waits until we are ready to see it.

JOY: finding it in the darkest places

For a long time after Hannah's death, I was afraid to laugh or smile. I didn't want to betray her suffering by feeling happy. As time passed, this feeling lifted. I smiled more and cried less. I noticed signs and synchronicities that reminded me of Hannah.

Joy is fleeting when grief makes a home in your life. I learned to find it in the darkest places. Saying 'yes' in the moment reveals unexpected happiness. I rarely make plans ahead of time now, as I

[continued on page six]

IN THE LILT OF IRISH LAUGHTER YOU CAN HEAR THE ANGELS SING



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



Please give some thought to volunteering with The Compassionate Friends. Our Chapter is growing and we need helping hands to continue to help others that are new to this path of grief. We need not

**Save the date! The Compassionate Friends Quakertown Chapter Annual Memorial Walk & Butterfly Release
Noon to 3pm ~ June 13, 2020 (rain or shine) Location: James Memorial Park; 1028 Ridge Road; Sellersville, PA**



The Compassionate Friends

Quakertown Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Serving Bucks and Montgomery Counties



About Our Chapter

Barbara Reboratti, Chapter Coordinator
& Chapter Delegate to National
Ginny Leigh-Manuel-Membership Outreach
Crystal Hunter, Social Media Coordinator &
Sibling Outreach
Sherri Albro, Chapter Treasurer
Gail Blase, Chapter Secretary
Mary Anne Macko, Assistant Secretary
Linda Stauffer, Chapter Newsletter &
Website Creator & Maintenance
Theresa Sitko, Memorial Garden Director
Lynette Lampmann, Hospitality
Mary Catherine Nederostek, Hospitality
Diane Guerecki, Remembrance Cards
Lisa Dechant, Remembrance Cards
Dianna Cox
Bob Albro
Carol Graham

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're 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 March Birthdays

3/3 - Earl Colella III, son of Jaynee & Earl Colella

3/5 - Jacquelyn Dahms, daughter of Don & Lorraine Croisette

3/5 - Genine Leary, daughter of Jon & Sylvia Holznagel

3/5 - Leslie Ann Kobzina, daughter of Randy & Lori Ann Kobzina

3/8 - Laim Williamson, son of Erin & Daniel Williamson

3/10 - Rachel Behrig, daughter of David & Kimberly Behrig

3/11 - George Davish, son of Sheryle & George Davish

3/13 - Rodney Bossert, son of Julia Bossert Roush

3/15 - Kristy Bender, daughter of Kathy & Frank Bender

3/15 - Robert Dorman, Jr., brother of Donna & Greg Rowe

3/15 - Donnie Daniels, Jr., son of Don & Kelly Daniels

3/16 - Olivia Fretz, daughter of Andy & Jennifer Fretz

3/16 - Brandon Leathers, son of Jim Leathers

3/17 - Julie Hartwich, daughter of Donna & Dave Hartwich

3/18 - Joseph Cooper, son of Edith Cooper

3/18 - Ryan Heimerdinger, son of Robert & Barbara Heimerdinger

3/18 - Brian Keim, son of Ronald & Joan Keim

3/18 - Paul Swope, son of Marge Swope

3/19 - Billy Klinedinst, son of Michelle Klinedinst

3/20 - Amber Eisenstein, daughter of Ben Eisenstein

3/21 - Chris Trauger, son of Mary Anne Macko & Mike Hamilton; Jim Trauger; grandson of Dolly Bibic

3/21 - Matthew DiNicola, son of Ron & Myra DiNicola

3/21 - Sarah Parvin, daughter of Sandy & Keith Parvin

3/22 - Ryan McGuinness, son of Tim McGuinness

3/24 - James Hector Lillo, son of Liz & Bryon Lillo

3/26 - Peter Michael Hallinan, son of Carol & Tom Hallinan

3/26 - Zachary Dawson, son of Roger & Becky Dawson

3/26 - Joshua Adair, grandson of Lois Harner

3/26 - Hunter Larrabee, son of Michelle Larrabee & Steve Argue

3/26 - Karisa Kade, daughter of Kathy & Mike Fluck

3/28 - Alexis Falcone, daughter of Dominic & Carolyn Falcone

3/28 - Jason Heuckeroth, son of Debbie & Mark Heuckeroth

3/28 - Eric Hill, son of David & Susan Hill

3/29 - Kathleen "Tia" Conn, daughter of Kathy & Robert Smith

3/30 - Donna Lee Stichter, daughter of Don & Carol Collis

3/31 - Justin Hunter, brother of Crystal Hunter; son of Pat & Annette Hunter





You never expect to bury your children no matter how old or young they are at the time of death. The death of a child, then, is a deeply complicated loss that challenges parents on so many levels.

You may experience a range of emotions. The inherent unfairness of such a loss may cause tremendous anger. Such anger is natural. However, it may drive away the very people you look to for support at this difficult time.

Guilt also may be intense. You may grapple with the notion, however unrealistic, that you could or should have prevented the death—the irrational belief that parents can always protect their children. Guilt may have other sources as well. You may feel guilty about things that were said or left unsaid, reviewing with those normal moments of parent-child relationships. You may fear that this is a punishment for some imagined sin of your own past or feel guilty that you live and your child does not. You may even feel guilty about your grief—wondering if your grief is too intense or not strong enough. You may experience other emotions as well—loneliness, sadness, yearning, anxiety, and helplessness.

Grief is not just emotions. You may feel unwell physically. It may be difficult to concentrate or focus. Images of your child may flood you at times. You may behave differently—perhaps withdrawing, or becoming lethargic, apathetic, or aggressive. You might even find yourself in constant activity as you try to fill the empty spaces and avoid your pain.

The death of a child often is traumatic. It shatters assumptions of what the world should be. It may cause you to question your beliefs as you try to find answers for questions that cannot be answered. A child's death is a family loss. Everyone in the family is affected—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. This may make it more difficult to get support from those around you as each person copes with their own, deeply personal sense of loss.

This may even be true of husbands and wives. Grief is very individual. You may each find that your experience of grief, the ways you express your grief, as well as how you deal with the loss are different. This does not mean that one person loved the child more. Rita wondered about that. When their daughter died of SIDS, she was constantly crying. Her husband though was active—supporting the SIDS Foundation and talking with other parents who had experienced the loss. They both deeply loved their child—they just grieved in their own ways.

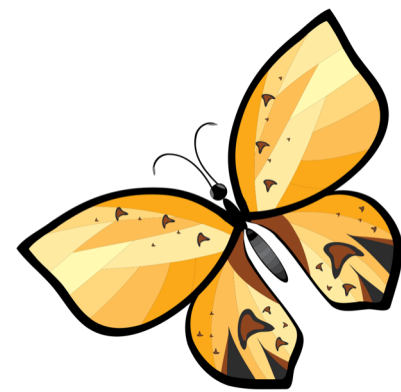
It is not unusual that parents, and perhaps siblings, may carry what Dr. Dennis Klass calls, an inner representation of the deceased child. That means that family members are very aware of the age the child would now be and imagine what the child would be like. While such a reaction is both normal and natural, it may become problematic if parents have such an idealized image of the child that living siblings can never hope to match.

This loss may affect every aspect of your relationship. Some couples, for example, wrestle with intimacy—needing both the physical closeness even as they may feel reluctant to sexually re-engage. While the death of a child may strain relationships, there is no evidence to support the myth that couples inevitably divorce. Now, though I quickly debunk it lest it become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

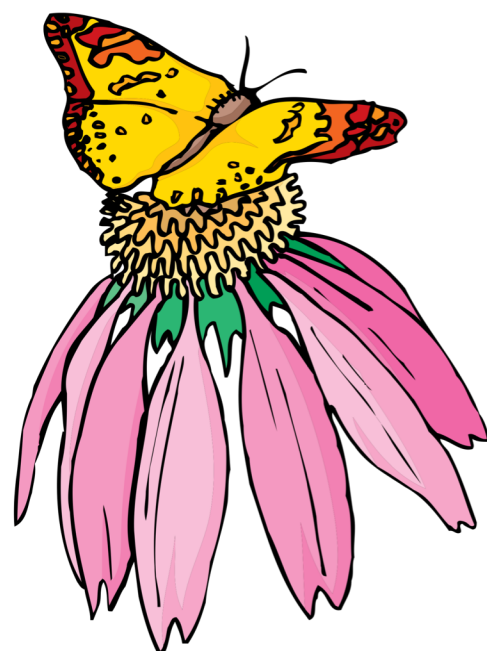
Kenneth J. Doka Ph.D.

Our Children Remembered on the Anniversary of Their Death

Loved , missed and alway in our hearts



- 3/2 - **Philip Lecklikner**, brother of Joseph & Karen Davis
3/2 - **Jamie Frick Standish**, daughter of Terry Frick
3/2 - **Patrick Pettie**, son of Doreene Pettie
3/4 - **Ardyth Cope**, daughter of Carol Cope
3/5 - **Ryan Kintzly**, son of Tammy Devine
3/5 - **Genine Leary**, daughter of Jon & Sylvia Holznagel
3/6 - **Timothy Raymond**, son of John & Tina Raymond
3/6 - **Robert Reynolds**, brother of Lisa Robey
3/7 - **Wendy Croisette**, daughter of Marvin & Ellen Croisette; sister of Todd, Terri-Lynn, & Jeffrey
3/7 - **Jamie Stewart**, son of Jim & Beverly Stewart, brother of Sherrie
3/8 - **Marc Bannon**, son of Jan & Kevin Bannon, brother of Aimee
3/8 - **Jessica Gallagher**, daughter of Robyn & Ron Gallagher; sister of Ronnie & Jaclyn
3/8 - **Kathryn "Katie" Stauffer**, daughter of Carl & Linda Stauffer; sister of Chrissy
3/11 - **Shaun Barton**, son of Catherine Barton
3/11 - **Richard "Drew" Panettieri**, son of Richard & Suzanne Panettieri
3/12 - **Walter Pettie, Jr.**, son of Doreene Pettie
3/12 - **Joy Wong**, sister of Jody Wong
3/14 - **Marc Falcone**, son Dominic & Carolyn Falcone
3/16 - **Adam Sautner**, son of Bonnie & Alfred Sautner
3/17 - **Demetrios "Jimmy" Asprakis**, son of Joan Asprakis
3/18 - **Christine McGhee**, daughter of Dawn McGhee
3/19 - **David Curran**, son of Barbara Santaniello
3/21 - **Captain Laura Eberts**, daughter of Joseph & Karen Matejik
3/21 - **Tammy Moore**, daughter of Tom & Sandra Moore; sister of Tom, Tara & Thad
3/22 - **Olivia Fretz**, daughter of Andy & Jennifer Fretz
3/22 - **Lisa Koletty**, daughter of Barbara & Dietrich Koletty
3/22 - **Justin Landis**, son of Amy & David Landis
3/23 - **Karen Graham**, daughter of John & Barbara Graham
3/24 - **Kenneth Kolb**, brother of Kathy Holloway
3/24 - **Jesse Swindell**, son of Ronald & Tina Jackson
3/24 - **Abigail Schumer**, daughter of Mike & Meg Schumer
3/25 - **Glen Scott**, son of Doris & Fred Crouthamel
3/28 - **Kristy McCoy**, daughter of Arlin & Donna Moyer
3/29 - **Matt Barber**, son of Noel & Tim Barber
3/29 - **Rennis Reitz II**, son of Barbara Reitz



can't be certain how I will feel.

This way of seeing allows us to release the need for everything to be perfect. Joy is the possibility of happiness in every moment, the feeling that we are right where we need to be.

FAITH: from "my will be done" to "thy will be done"

Three months after Hannah's death, I stood by the side of a road, prepared to take my own life. I was not afraid of death, no matter what happens Hannah is already there. As a truck approached, I suddenly became aware of my lungs breathing. I forgot about the truck and focused on my breath. I realized that something in me is still choosing life. I stayed alive to find out why.

" I cannot change it, but I can change the way I live with it."

There are no words to describe the space left absent when a child dies. The love you feel has nowhere to go. The longer your child is gone, the more you miss them. This missing becomes a part of you.

Strange comfort, this holding of everything in one place; yet I see an intelligence beyond imagining which orchestrates life and nature. While it is painful to accept Hannah's death, I also see her life making a difference in this world. Someone once described the earth as the planet for slow-learners. Faith trusts and breathes when it's all we can do.

COMPASSION: from specialness to belonging

I do not know why Hannah died and other children didn't. At first, I felt a sense of specialness. No one could know the depth of my pain. For a while, I didn't want to speak with anyone unless they had lost a child. Gradually, I began to connect with other people.

Forgiveness is key throughout the journey of grief: forgiveness of those who live and of those who die. As I learn to forgive myself, I find it easier to forgive others. Our intent in harnessing grief makes transformation possible. 'Grief' shares the same root as 'grave', 'gravity', and 'gravitation'. It is a force with weight and heft. Once

engaged, it can be redirected.

When Hannah was first diagnosed, one of her doctors gave us good advice. He said, "Remember, no matter what happens, make the best decision you can with the information you have AT THAT TIME." Of course, we would change things if we knew then what we know now. There is no solace in blaming others and ourselves for not knowing.

Although I sometimes have less patience for other people and their problems, I see each of us is a unique lens in a shared experience. Compassion softens our gaze and allows us to appreciate new perspectives. When we reach beyond our specialness, we realize we are not alone.

WONDER: from needing to know to letting go

There was a house in our little town that was painted pink from top to bottom. Hannah loved this house. In the last year of her life, each time we passed it, she would say, "That's where I am going to live!"

A year and a half after Hannah's death, my daughter Madelaine was born. One day, when Madelaine was almost three-years old, we were driving to the grocery store. Suddenly Madelaine started shrieking from the back seat, I turned to see what was happening and saw her pointing to the pink house.

"Mommy," she exclaimed, "That's the house where Hannah and I played in heaven before I was born!"

I had no idea how she knew, and in that moment I didn't need to. Hannah's death opened me to realms I never knew existed. Having watched my Father and my daughter take their last breaths, I remember a peaceful presence entering the room. This energy called life is where I feel our children's presence is, and their spirits still make themselves known.



My Beloved Katie
 June 24, 1983-
 March 8, 2003
 Donations to Katie
 Stauffer Memorial
 Scholarship can be sent
 to QCHS, Park Ave,
 Quakertown, PA 18951

My Beloved Katie

To honor you, I get up everyday and take a breath. And start another day without you in it.

To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile and the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.

To honor you, I take the time to appreciate everyone I love, I know now there is no guarantee of days or hours spent in their presence.

To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked, And sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.

To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back, Risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance.

You were my light, my heart, my gift of love, from the very highest source.

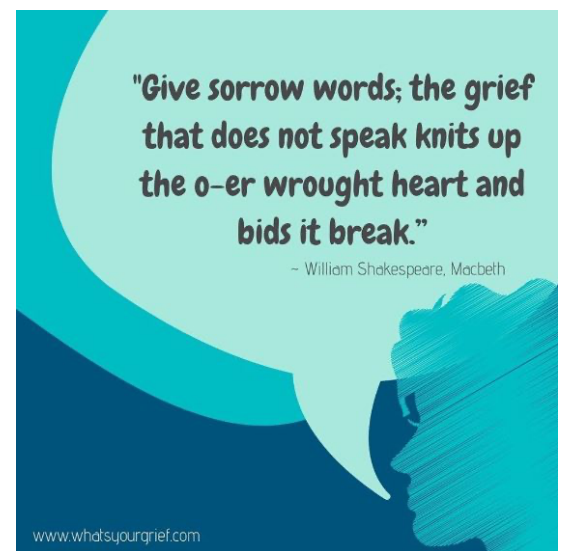
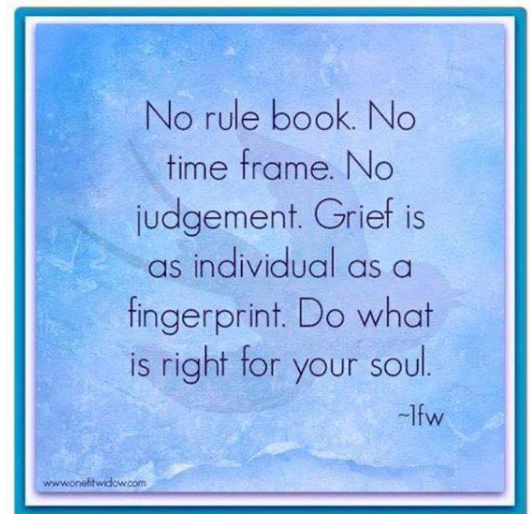
So everyday, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love.

Now I live for us both, so all I do, I do to honor you.

What's more amazing than a child that has just arrived
 What's more joyful than a child that is fun and alive
 What's more easy to do, than to put a child's mistakes aside
 What's more rewarding than playing with a child in the tide
 What's more demanding than teaching a child to drive
 What's more beautiful than watching a child become a bride
 What's more sad and easier to make you cry
 Than having to kiss a child and say goodbye

By Nick A Cooper,

Submitted by Edith Cooper, Joseph Cooper's Mom



"In loving memory of my Christopher J. Trauger, an avid journal writer and voracious reader. March 1974 - June 2001"



Refreshments for February

We gratefully acknowledge the following families who provided the refreshments for our February meeting:

Claire and Frank Ciccarone in loving memory of daughter Lillian

Lori Jordan in loving memory of son Andrew Flath

Alyssa Sandt in loving memory of Andrew Flath

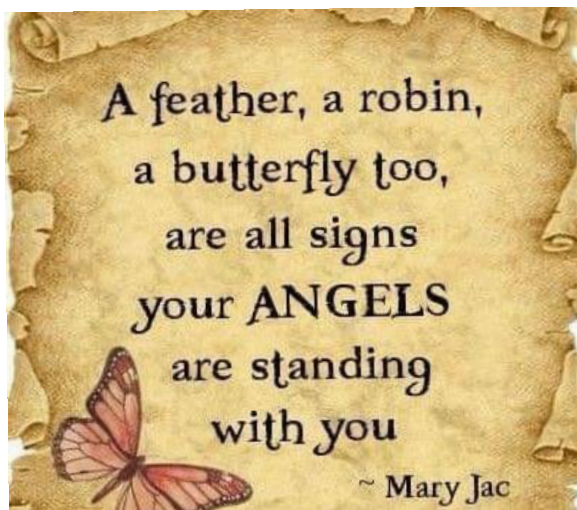
Gail Blasé in loving memory of daughter Katey Blasé

Craig Duvall in loving memory of son Kinsey

Lynette Lampmann in loving memory of son Shawn.

Hospitality update:

We are instituting a new procedure for monthly refreshments. Starting in March for the general meetings we will no longer have a sign up sheet for refreshments for each month thus eliminating phone calls prior to the meeting. Instead we will have the hospital provide cookies with the beverages. All are welcome to bring refreshments, in memory of a loved one, any time you so desire for the monthly meetings. You can also contribute a donation at the meeting or mail in as previously done. We will continue to recognize the generous families who supply the refreshments and or donations in the newsletter as well as the night of the meeting. WE wish to thank all for your continued support.



A special thank you to Diane Guerecki, Kasey Bradley Lisa Dechant, Jenifer Pini and Crystal Hunter for the Remembrance cards that you receive. They do this in memory of their children/ siblings: 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. Thanks to Barb and Bob Heimerdinger for applying the memorial Plaques to the wall in the memorial garden. They do this in remembrance of their son Ryan.

If heaven had a window

and God granted me a view
of all the beauty it beholds,
I'd only look for you.

I'd listen for your laughter that was always
music to me. If I could only view once
more the smile that warmed my heart,
I'd treasure that moment as long as I
live and we must be apart.

Messages For The Soul

Here on earth I search for you and pray to
God for signs, and every day that passes
you're still with me in my mind.

Kathy J Parenteau

Messages For The Soul

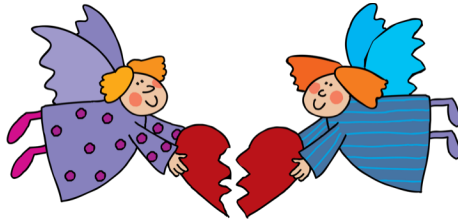
Love Gifts

From Linda & Dan Brophy in memory of their daughter Alexandria Gasior

From Pat and Harold Hunsicker; in loving memory of our daughter, Brenda Meehl.

From Steven Tondera, in memory of his son, Michael.

*In memory of Skye A Gilbert; You are always in our hearts and thinking of you.
Love, Susan (Mom), Jaylee (daughter) and Lucas (son).*



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. **Please make checks payable to The Compassionate Friends Quakertown Chapter.** (Bank will not accept just TCF)

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

Circle One: *In Memory* or *In Honor* of (name of person) _____

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

Love Gift Message:

Your Name: _____

Email or Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Checks payable to
**The Compassionate Friends
Quakertown Chapter**
PO Box 1013
Quakertown, PA 18951

Treasurer Use Only

Cash/Check # _____ Amount _____

D _____ Q _____ T _____ N _____



The Compassionate Friends
Quakertown Chapter
PO Box 1013
Quakertown, PA 18951

Next Meetings : March 10, April 14



The Compassionate Friends Credo

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.

