



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
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NOVEMBER &
DECEMBER 2017

TCF MONTHLY MEETINGS

ALBANY

7:30 pm
3rd Tuesday every month
Westminster Presbyterian Church
85 Chestnut St., Albany
Jan Messina 439-0346
Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

SARATOGA

1st Tuesday of every month- 7:30 pm
Wesley Health Center Care
Activities Room, Lawrence St.
Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

SCHENECTADY

1st Wednesday every month
St. Kateri Library, 1803 Union St.
John Powers 399-2492
JoAnn Bomeisl 372-8215

MID-HUDSON VALLEY

2nd Wednesday every month
Chris Yurchuk
845-691-2111

GREENE COUNTY

2nd Wednesday every month
United Methodist Church
Woodland Ave., Catskill
Judy 622-4023



TELEPHONE FRIENDS

Having a bad day? Need someone to talk to? Want information about the next meeting? Help is just a phone call away

Jan Messina 439-0346
Gabby Gravelle 596-4275
Helen Connors 226-0557

Holiday Thoughts

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them.

But the holidays have a lesson for us too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

In a society which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

- Dennis Klass

TCF St. Louis, MO



Albany Chapter Candlelight Service Tuesday, Dec. 19th, 7:30

Please join us for the Albany Chapter's annual Candlelight Remembrance ceremony. As in years' past, we will hear readings, listen to music and light candles in memory of our deceased children. We know that the holidays are difficult so this is a great time to be around others who share your sorrow and know how important it is to remember your child. Maybe you haven't said your child's name out loud for quite some time. This is a perfect opportunity to speak your child's name and light a candle for the beloved children who live forever in our hearts.

The ceremony will last about an hour, and we will meet in the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany. Parking is available next door and all family and friends are welcome to attend. Light refreshments will be served.



LOVE GIFTS

Living on in our hearts.

This newsletter is made possible by donations through love gifts. Love gifts are a way that we can honor our children throughout the year, on their birthday, anniversary of their death or during the holidays. Please consider giving a love gift in memory of your children. Love gifts can be made in any dollar amount and mailed to Debbie Bouchey, 26 Berkshire Drive, East Greenbush, NY 12061.

“...If you have a memory of someone who has died, give it freely to those who are left behind...in the sharing of memories is born the beginnings of hope and healing.”

-Darcie D. Sims

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
December 20, 2017**

In loving memory of all our children who have gone before us. Especially during this holiday season when we seem to miss them the most.



Giving Thanks

I cannot hold your hands today,
I cannot see your smile.
I cannot hear your voices now,
My children, who are gone.
But I recall your faces still,
the songs, the talks, the sighs,
and story times and winter walks
and sharing secret things.
I know you helped my mind to live
beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see,
You gave me finer ears to hear
what living means, what dying means,
My children, who are gone.
So here it is Thanksgiving Day,
and you are not with me.
And, while I weep a mother's tears
I thank you for the gifts you were,
and all the gifts you gave to me.
My children who are gone.

“Wintersun” By Sascha

The Empty Chair

The table is set and ready with food to
delight the eye.
Everyone is waiting with anticipation high.
But one place is empty,
void of a loved one dear.
And as we pause to remember,
we wipe away a tear.
Your chair may be empty,
and your presence no longer there,
but your memory is with us,
as we gather around this fare.
Someone recalls something you once said,
And the memories start to flow,
And in this magic moment,
your spirit upon us glows.
Gone but never forgotten,
as with us you'll always be.
And if I look close,
your presence in the empty chair I see.

By: Sheila Simmons, Dallas, GA



21st ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING



DECEMBER 10th, 7 P.M.

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 21st annual worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from the Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WWCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

Every year you are invited to post a message in the Remembrance Book which will be available during the event, at TCF's national website: www.compassionatefriends.org.

I LIGHT THIS CANDLE

I light this candle in memory of you,
My life, my child, my heart,
May it shine bright and true,
As you did from the start.

In it's flickering flame I see,
The life we shared together,
the love and wonderful memories,
That I'll carry with me forever.

I light this candle in memory of you,
I look up to the Heavens
where you are,
I see the lights of heaven
shining bright too,
But your candle shines brighter
than the brightest star.

My child you are still so much a part of me,
Even though you are no longer here,
You live on in my heart where
you will always be,
No matter what, I will always keep you there.
On this special night I light this candle for you,
And I hope everyone who sees it will know,
How very special you are,
how much you are loved and missed too,
And will remember you with me
when they see it's golden glow.

-Judi Walker

*In memory of her son, Shane 2003
BPUSA, Western NY Chapter
Autumn 2013 newsletter*

**In loving memory, unseen and unheard,
but always near, so loved, so missed and so dear**

*By Bea Morgan
Mother of Caroline Smith
Lovingly lifted from BPUSA, Western NY Chapter
Newsletter, Autumn 2013*

I SAID I COULD NOT DO IT, BUT I DID!

Exactly 8:05 a.m. Friday, July 9, 1971, was the last time I looked at my eight year-old daughter with her eyes open. I walked beside her as they rolled her down the hall to the elevator that would take her down to the operating room for her simple, routine tonsillectomy.

At exactly 1:30 that afternoon, I was told she was dead. I said then I could not live a day without her. I just could not do it.

BUT I DID

During the drive home, I said I would never be able to walk in that house without her.

BUT I DID

As I walked in that empty house, someone quickly ran and shut her door -- the door to her room where she kept all the things she loved. The room where she played and slept. I said I could never go in there again. I said I could not do it.

BUT I DID

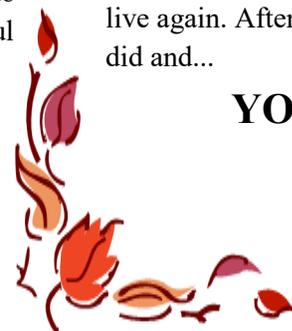
When they said, "Come, let's go to the funeral, the Rosary, the Mass," I said I could not do it.

BUT I DID

For months that followed, I just knew my life would never be the same and it wasn't. All the things I said I could not do did get done. All the life I said I could not live did get lived. Differently, but I did live. Now comes today -- 16 years later. I have to admit, I had to look it up to be sure. Sixteen years! Palmer Ann would have been 24 years old. I had to stop and think about that, too.

I stood before her portrait today and stared a long, long time, and yes, I remembered the pain with total recall of July 9, 1971. I reached out, touching what's left of my memory of her and I offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to God -- a prayer of gratitude, for giving me such a beautiful eight years with a lovely daughter, and most of all, the opportunity to be able to stand there and realize that I had said I could not do it, but I did.

YES I DID



TAKE YOUR TIME

One of the hardest things about grief is the so-called "time table." You are told you should be feeling one-way or the other. You are given a time to mourn by the outside world, and then you must be "over it." "Get on with your life." "Count your blessings." All of this can make you both angry and afraid. Angry because (A) you don't WANT to "get over it," (B) you are "getting on" with your life in the best way you know how and (C) your "blessings" have nothing whatsoever to do with the pain of your loss! Afraid because you are not having some of the feelings you think you should be having because you are not reacting "normally." There is a period of extreme shock that can last from a few weeks to several months; you may not feel anything except numbness for a while. That's OK!

The best advise is... take your time. Be gentle with yourself. Do what you need to do, not what you think you should do. Don't clutter up your life with things that will exhaust you physically and weaken you emotionally. Remember, you are fighting the hardest battle you will ever have to face, so give yourself the best weapons you can. Rest, get in touch with your feelings, and talk. Say your child's name to anyone who will listen... take time...your time ... to heal.

*Sandra Young
TCF, Knoxville, TN*

And each month when I come to a Compassionate Friends meeting with you, the new member, I share the pain that I know you are feeling -- that hopelessness of the future, I smile to myself, because inside I know a secret -- you will be okay. You will touch again, love again, laugh again, and live again. After all, I said I could not do it, but I did and...

YOU WILL, TOO!

*By: Betz Crump
TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL*

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Saturday, November 18, 2017

Every year, survivors of suicide loss gather together in locations around the world to feel a sense of community, to promote healing, and to connect with others that have had similar experiences. In 2016, there were over 350 Survivor Day events in 18 countries.

Each location welcomes survivors of suicide loss, providing a safe and healing space where everyone can comfortably participate in a way that is meaningful to them. Join with others to listen to a diverse panel of survivors discuss their losses, how they coped, and much more.

Come in person to experience that powerful sense of connection and community that is forged between survivors of suicide loss. You are not alone. This

day is for you. Local Events are being held in Albany, Troy & Schenectady. To get more information and register for an event, visit www.afsp.org

If you are not able to attend a Survivor Day event in person on **November 18, 2017, at 4:30 p.m. ET** AFSP will host a 90-minute online program for those who aren't able to attend a Survivor Day event in person.

The program will include a screening of the documentary *The Journey: A Story of Healing and Hope*, as well as the new follow-up featurette *The Journey Revisited*; a post-screening discussion on coping and healing after a suicide loss; and a Q&A with online viewers.



‘Twas the Night Before Christmas”

- for Bereaved Parents -

‘Twas the Night before Christmas and I dreaded the days,
That I knew I was facing - the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.
As others were making their holiday plans,
My heart was breaking - I couldn't understand
I had lost my dear child a few years before,
And I knew what my holiday had in store.
When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet and was looking around,
Away to I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The sight that I saw took my breath away,
And my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a cluster of butterflies fluttering near,

With beauty and grace they performed a dance,
I knew in a moment this wasn't by chance,
The hope that they gave me was a sign from above.
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.
The message they brought was my holiday gift,
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.
As I knelt closer to get a better view,
One allowed me to pet it - as if it knew -
That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,
To help me get through the holiday scene.
In the days that followed I carried the thought,
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us - they're not really dead.
Yes, the message of hope - a message so dear.
And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight,
“To all bereaved parents - We love you tonight!”

*By Faye McCord
TCF, Jackson, MS*



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Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

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www.compassionatefriends.org

TCF's 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.



TCF's VISION: That everyone who needs us will find us and everyone who finds us will be helped.

The Compassionate Friends
c/o Debbie Bouchey
26 Berkshire Drive
East Greenbush, NY 12061

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