



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

MAY—JUNE 2020

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm

ZOOM MEETING

Please contact Kathleen Kelleher at Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com or 518-439-1114 for instructions on how to join the Zoom meetings.

OTHER LOCAL CHAPTERS

Due to the Coronavirus, many chapters have ceased in-person meeting, but may be holding virtual meetings. Please call your local chapter to inquire about meetings.

SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Gabby Gravelle 518-596-4275

SCHENECTADY CHAPTER

JoAnn Bomeisl 518-372-8215

tcf1389@gmail.com

John Powers 518-399-2492

jpower11@nycap.rr.com

Peggy Hohenstein 518-887-5204

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

GREENE COUNTY CHAPTER

georgeknoll64@yahoo.com

Carol 518-537-6098

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPTER CO-LEADERS

At this trying, terrible time Jan and I want you all to know that we are available via telephone and email. Since we are not able to meet at the Westminster Presbyterian Church for the foreseeable future, we are exploring other ways to stay in touch. We know that the COVID-19 virus has added another stress to all of our already stressed lives, and coping with the added restrictions and limitations is an additional heavy burden to bear for we who grieve the loss of our children. Our former Chapter leader, Margaret, said many times "be kind to yourself", and I think it applies at this time now more than ever. Please make every effort to stay safe and healthy, continue to stay in touch with TCF on our website, tcfalbany.org, Contact Jan via call or text on her cell 518-396-9914 or email her at JanMessina@verizon.net. I can be reached at 518-439-1114 Home or 518-744-0659 Cell, or email

Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com.

Kathleen

Albany Chapter Meetings

Since COVID-19 restrictions have been in place, the Albany Chapter has been conducting their meetings through Zoom. Please contact Kathleen Kelleher at Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com or 518-439-1114 for instructions on how to join the Zoom meetings.

Prayer for Spring

Like springtime, let me unfold and grow fresh and new from this cocoon of grief that has been spun around me.

Help me face the harsh reality of sunshine and renewed life as my bones still creak from the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me as I recover from the insult of life's continuance.

I re-adjust my focus to include recovery and growth as a possibility in my future.

Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief, but may I never forget it as the place where I grew my wings,

Becoming a new person
Because of my loss

*Janice Heil
Coquitlam, BC Canada*



LOVE GIFT

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.

Call for Submissions

Anyone wishing to submit an original poem or story for publication in our newsletter can do so by sending the writing to Debbie Bouchey at alyssabob@yahoo.com

Please remember that editing may occur and not all submissions are guaranteed to be printed.

In memory of our daughter, **LISA GERHAN**, 1971-1997.

Love, Mom & Dad (David Gerhan & Anita Paul)

In loving memory of **TOM CHRISTOPHER**, 30 years ago Tom was 24 years old, going HOME after 10 years fighting leukemia.

Love, Mom (Elaine Christopher)

In loving memory of **JASMINE PEARL JOHNSON**. "Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come."
Rabindranath Tagore Love, Aunt Dale



Happy Birthday to our beautiful angel, **STEPHY BO**, forever sweet 16 on Earth and now your 16th birthday in Heaven!! May every day in Heaven be a celebration!! We hold you safely in our hearts forever!!

Love, Mom, Dad, Rachel & Lauren

She doesn't want diamonds, or perfume,
or gold.

She wants to hear a story, one her son
told.

She doesn't chase wealth, maybe beauty,
not fame.

You can make her smile by saying his
name.

As you talk about your children, don't
forget she has one too.

A mother's love lives on and on,
he's only gone to you.

Look through all your pictures,
maybe you'll see his face.

Please handle it gently, that gift of

precious grace.

Don't think it will cause her too much pain
since it makes you feel uneasy.

She's still a mother, he's still her son.

That picture is what she needs.

Losing a child, you never get over it.

He was part of your family too.

A picture, a name, a memory
would be so kind of you.

By: Kim Snyder

Shanel's mother & Anthony Orsi's grandmother
Loving lifted from BPUSA/Western NY Chapter

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
June 20, 2020**

AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS ABOUT OUR 2020 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Dear Compassionate Friends,

A few weeks ago, we wrote to you to share how The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is responding to the Coronavirus pandemic and the challenges it has presented for our national conference this summer in Atlanta, GA. Since that time, we have been watching national developments and considering the many issues surrounding our ability to hold the conference in July.

We want to share with you that we have made the very difficult decision to cancel the national conference currently scheduled in Atlanta, GA, for July 24 to July 26, 2020. This decision has not been made lightly, and we recognize how important the annual conference is to so many of our members in providing community, connection, support, education, and care. Our Board of Directors, staff, Conference Co-chairs, and committee volunteers are as disappointed as many of you may be that we cannot proceed safely and responsibly with our plans for meeting in Atlanta this July.

We know that these are challenging and trying times we are all sharing right now. Some are fighting illness or experiencing the death of a loved one due to COVID-19, while others may have job, financial, or other losses. Many of us are experiencing the sudden loss of control and abrupt change of what we knew, triggering the deep pain of loss we are already experiencing from the death of our child, sibling, or grandchild. We also know that having the support of our TCF community is more important than ever as we experience our individual and collective grief.

Because of this, we are actively and diligently exploring options for alternative ways that we can continue to care for our community and meet some of the needs that come through a national conference. Many details are involved with this, and we will work through them one-by-one to find alternatives including possible later dates for an in-person conference, and ways to connect virtually through this extraordinary time. We truly are in new territory since this is the first time a conference has needed to be canceled due to significant events outside of our control.

We have already seen many volunteers throughout TCF step forward with new ways of serving our members' needs during this time, and these examples show the heart

of The Compassionate Friends. Please know we share this spirit and are committed to continued care for our community and leading the way with innovative ways to engage during this time.

As your new CEO, the Board of Directors and I were particularly excited for this first opportunity to meet in person when we were together in Atlanta this summer. While I'm disappointed this won't be able to happen in July, I remain very hopeful and optimistic that we'll all share meaningful time together before long.

We'll be working with the hotel to cancel existing July reservations. Those of you who already made your reservations should receive a notification of these cancellations soon. Additionally, those of you who are workshop presenters or keynote speakers will receive a separate correspondence in the coming days regarding this.

Please reach out with any questions you may have, and we'll continue to be in touch with you as we become clearer on additional options.

Stay safe, healthy, and well.

Shari O'Loughlin
Connor's Mom & Patti's Sister
Chief Executive Officer
The Compassionate Friends



tcfconferences@compassionatefriends.org

Debbie Dullabaun
Dale's Mom
President, Board of Directors
The Compassionate Friends
tcfconferences@compassionatefriends.org

2020 NATIONAL CONFERENCE SURVEY

The National Compassionate Friends is offering a survey about having a conference, either in person or virtually in 2020. If you would like to participate, below is a link to access the survey and provide your feedback.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/conference-survey/?bblinkid=220171275&bbemailid=21382370&bbejid=1477131022>

GRIEVING AND GROWING

Our TCF credo states that “We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together as we reach out to each other in love and 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.” I thought about those early years of grief after my son, Chris, was killed. I certainly didn't need anyone to “help me grieve,” that's for sure. I was pretty much sobbing and wailing on my own everywhere I went. I was also in despair and not wanting to live.

But after many years of TCF experience I think the writers of the credo wanted to impress upon us “fellow grievers” that not only don't we have to grieve alone, but we can learn some lessons in our grief to make something positive come out of our individual tragedies. We are the only ones qualified to determine what “that positive growth” might be. One of the lessons we might learn from grief is who or what is really important in life. Those of us who know the pain of loss can become aware of, and appreciate more, our meaningful personal relationships. Somehow material possessions, jobs and financial concerns don't seem as important any more. There seems to be a shift in and reevaluation of priorities, hence the beginning of the growth process. Sometimes bereaved family members begin trying new activities, develop new interests, find “new causes”, or are focused on building closer friends — those who will listen. Part of the process of growth is to seek out those individuals who are open to sharing our pain. Sometimes people might disappoint us, but eventually we will find those who will be patient and willing to give us what we need from them. We will find we can draw closer to these friends who might not even be our long-term friends. We can focus the energies we gave to our child and work toward a cause to make a difference in our world.

The growth of grief will come when we seek to understand what it is to live without our child. We can journal to track our healing and enrich our understanding about the grief process by learning from others in our group, or from books/articles on grief. We can persevere in our attempt to go on with life, even though there are times when we want to give up and give in to the grief. We can begin reaching out to others with the same love and care we once showered on our child or sibling. We can be more open about reaching out to comfort and encourage others. We might learn we are more relaxed in being with others in grief. We can care for them expecting nothing in return. We can use our sufferings to make us more compassionate; we can reach out and help others during their trials.

The growth will also come when we can be thankful for the child we had in our lives, and that we are blessed to love and be loved. He or she was a gift and that gift can be shared with others by remembering, memorializing and making a difference in life for others. Rejoicing in the gift of our child frees us to grieve as deeply as we loved without caring what others might think or feel. There is no quick fix for grief. Grief endures and our task is to “out endure” the grief until we reach a state of reinvestment in life again. A time when each of us can look at ourselves and say, “I'm a better person because I have grieved well and have used the love I still have for my child to reach out to others, bear some of their burdens, give lavishly to life, believe in strength of the human spirit, and embrace hope. Hope that life still holds joy and meaning for me, and I have things to do in memory and honor of my child.” May we have grace and courage as we go forward.

*Dedicated to the survivors of the 911 terrorist attacks
and in memory of their loved ones*

*Carole Dyck
TCF Verdugo Hills, CA*

*We say that the hour of death cannot be forecast,
but when we say this, we imagine that hour as placed in an
obscure and distant future. It never occurs to us that it has any
connection with the day already begun or that death could arrive
this same afternoon, this afternoon which is so certain
and which has every hour filled in advance.*

Marcel Proust

FATHER'S DAY

Every father believes his role is protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong — must not cry. But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And, inside we must ask ourselves about our failure for the death and pain, and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer-standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father it is a poignant reminder of bitter sweetness; sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost, child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of an inability to stop what happened.

Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Often times they are unable to do so, a remnant of childhood learnings about the strength and stoicism of "big boys." A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife, and the wife who pushes him to talk may be pushing too hard.

Father's Days does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked. Let's do it now," but it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug, does something special, helps with the chores, and mostly, lets him know how important and needed and loved he is. It is some of these things that he has lost with the death of a child. And, like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to a Sunday in June. It can be any day and every day.

Fathers often show their hurts differently, often internally, **BUT THEY DO HURT.**

*Gerry Hunt
TCF, White River Junction, VT*



SECOND SUNDAY OF MAY

Many happy memories,
Linger in our hearts this day,
As we each remember our child,
Who has left this earthly plane.
The day is bittersweet for us,
The mothers who have lost so much,
For to remove all pain could well
Erase the precious life we touched.
Tears will trace the memories of
Other, happier Mother's Days,
As we dwell in a quiet reverie,
This Second Sunday of May.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen, May 2006
TCF, Katy, TX*

A MOTHER IS FOREVER

This Mother's Day will trouble you,
it can't be otherwise,
since your son and daughter too,
won't be there by your side.

They won't be there to bake a cake
Or bring you cards and flowers,
Nor can they walk into your home
To brighten lonely hours.

The memories you have of them,
I know will make you smile,
and you'll remember all the joys,
that made your lives worthwhile.

And so on Mother's Day this year
and in every other,
remember they're connected still,
by love to you, their mother.

*Shirley Ottman
Teri's Mom
From "The Slender Thread"*



Leadership

Albany Co-Leader: Jan Messina 518-439-0346

Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher
518-439-1114

Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle
518-596-4275

Newsletter Editor: Debbie Bouchey
518-435-5321 or alyssabob@yahoo.com

Regional Coordinator:

Al Visconti: 518-756-9569

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.



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www.compassionatefriends.org

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