



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG  
WWW.COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG

MARCH-APRIL 2019

### 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

#### Beautiful!

#### Dare to Be

When a new day begins,  
Dare to smile gratefully.  
When there is darkness,  
Dare to be the first to shine a light.

When there is injustice,  
Dare to be the first to condemn it.  
When something seems difficult,  
Dare to do it anyway.

When life seems to beat you down,  
Dare to fight back.  
When there seems to be no hope,  
Dare to find some.

When you're feeling tired,  
Dare to keep going.  
When times are tough,  
Dare to be tougher.

When love hurts you,  
Dare to love again.  
When someone is hurting,  
Dare to help them heal.  
When another is lost,  
Dare to help them find the way.

When a friend falls,  
Dare to be the first to extend a hand.  
When you cross paths with another,  
Dare to make them smile.  
When you feel great,  
Dare to help someone else feel great too.

When the day has ended,  
Dare to feel as if you've done your best.  
Dare to be the best you can -

- Steve Maraboli

Reprinted from BPUSA Facebook Page  
28 days of gratitude and beyond

#### Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday,  
It'd been a while, you see,  
and there, without a warning,  
the pain washed over me,  
I drove the old way yesterday,  
and sadness came on strong,  
taken back by so much feeling,  
since you've been gone so long.  
Places seem to lie in wait,  
to summon up the tears,  
to say remember yesterday,  
those days when you were here.  
Places where you laughed and played  
are places where I cry,  
These places hold the memories  
that will live as long as I.

- Genesse Gentry

In memory of Lori Gentry  
TCF Marin County, CA

#### SEARCHING...

Once again, my list has vanished, it was here, but now it's missing.  
Keys and glasses disappearing;  
Books and letters -- overdue.  
I'm forever searching, searching,  
They must be here, and I need them!  
Could it be that what is missing, what I want this very minute...

Could it be that what I'm REALLY searching for, my child, is you?

Joyce Andrews  
TCF Sugar Land, TX



# 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.

I NEED YOU

Your eyes were my sky.

Your smile was my sun.

Your love was the air I breathed.

Your heart was my existence.

You were my reason for living.

I would give you my life.

If it meant you could come back to this world.

Jeanette Gustafsson  
TCF, Qld.  
6/11/05

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER: April 20, 2019**

**Happy Birthday TOM GALARNEAU - always missed and never forgotten. 1/11/1971 - greatest day for all who love you so very much.**

**Love, Mom, Brother Don and niece Margaret Irene**

## What Are We Waiting For?

My brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister's bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. "This", he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie." He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite: silk, handmade, and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. The price tag with an astronomical figure was still attached. "Jan bought it the first time we went to New York eight or nine years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the special occasion."

He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the funeral home. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment. He slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. "Don't ever save anything for a special occasion."

I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane returning home. I thought about all the things she hadn't seen or heard or done. I thought about the things that she had done without realizing that they were special.

I still think about his words and how they've changed my life. I read more and dust less. I sit on the deck and admire the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden. I spend more time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I try to recognize those moments now and cherish them. I don't

save anything. We use our good china for every special event—such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, or discovering the first camellia blossom. I wear my good blazer to the market if I feel like it. I don't save my good perfume for special parties. "Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing, hearing, or doing, I want to see, hear, and do it now.

I am not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn't be here for the tomorrows we all take for granted. I think she would have called family members and a few close friends. She might have called a few former friends to apologize and mend fences for past squabbles. It's these little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew my hours were limited—angry because I put off seeing good friends, angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intended to write, angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them. I am trying not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives. Every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it's a special day.

- Ann Wells  
TCF Laguna Niguel, CA  
In memory of my sister, Jan



# I'll Never Have The Chance Again

Ever since the day you left my world  
The rain has been falling hard from the sky  
Just like the tears that fall from my eyes, when I think about what happened.

Alyssa was one of the best girls ever  
We had so many great times together, like listening to music  
I'd go over her house, and her brother would go to mine  
Talking all night long, about what was happening in her high school  
And about what was happening in my middle school

**I'll never have the chance again.**



I considered her a sister  
I loved how she would hang out with me, since I was 5 years younger than her.

**I'll never have the chance again.**

Every time I would say something  
She would go "Keelieeeeeee!", but most of all  
I loved how I could look up to her knowing when I got older  
I wanted to be just like her!

**I'll never have the chance again.**

One of my favorite memories that always makes me smile is when I was at Alyssa's house  
and Alyssa was rushing to get ready and looking for her missing shoe,  
her dog, Brandy, would be in the closet chewing on her shoe.  
Alyssa would go crazy and laughed hysterically.

**I'll never have the chance again.**

Alyssa was beautiful, caring, nice, and funny  
She was one of those popular dream Barbie dolls every little girl wanted to be  
She had the looks, personality, and last but not least, an amazing heart

Since she has passed away  
Passed away to heaven  
I want her to know  
That I miss her as much as I love her.  
Every step I take, every move I make  
I'll be missing Alyssa  
She'll always be in my heart  
A special memory that will never be forgot

*By Keelie Forbes 1-22-05*

*Written in memory of Alyssa Bouchey two days after Alyssa's death*

*Keelie was 12 years old*

## COPING WITH BEING NEWLY BEREAVED AND CHILDLESS

By Kay Bevington

Experiencing the death of a child is the ultimate grief that any parent will ever encounter. Having one's only child or all children die compounds that ultimate grief to the point of being unthinkable for most people in our society today.

People often ask how one can possibly survive when all of our children are deceased. Most bereaved parents wonder that same thing for several years. Surely we will die. There is no way we can survive, let alone actually live when all our children are gone before us. Some have shared that they actually spent all of their resources, only to find themselves financially depressed years later when they realized that no matter how much they willed themselves to die, they were still on this earth.

Childless parents endure a similar grieving process as those bereaved parents with surviving children, but the difference begins quickly when there are no children and will never be grandchildren, no one to help celebrate special occasions, or be there for us as we age. Often days, weeks, and months pass with no phone calls, visits, cards, letters or interaction from family unless we, the bereaved parent, take the initiative.

Childless parents have extreme difficulty with holidays and special events. Some of us are fortunate to have friends or extended family members who think to include us in special times or holidays, but others are left to spend all those days and nights totally alone. Most of us have learned to "entertain" others so that we are not left alone for those special times.

We learn to adjust to being childless and make friends with others who have had a similar experience. Some of us with no children get together during special holidays or visit each other during the year. There is a special bond of understanding that need not be spoken. Other now childless parents understand this unspoken bond as only those who "walk in our shoes" can truly understand.

Childless parents realize that we must plan for our future and see that all financial, medical, and business matters are secure and settled long before the time arrives when we will need assistance. What do we do with our precious mementos that belonged to our deceased child or "things" that are important to us and our heritage? Often, some of our relatives, friends, or children of friends care enough to want some of those things that are so precious to us. We also might come to find that our feelings about them may change as we age. Life's values may help us realize those things are not what matters anyway. We often find that what we do with our lives and how we manage to keep our children's memories alive by helping others are really what is more important.

Some bereaved childless parents also are widowed or divorced. Some also are an only child themselves and their parents are deceased. Some have since found that their family has "disowned" them as their childless state has made

them unapproachable. These childless bereaved parents often need additional support from trained professionals.

I have found that by staying involved in church, community activities, nurturing relationships with other people, and working part-time, I have been able to keep a positive attitude most of the time and find a "new type of happiness" in life. Times and events occur occasionally that cause me to lose my perspective and get depressed. But I can always observe others who seem to have a more difficult time with life events who have not been touched with the grief of having a child die.

I have also observed that parents who have not endured the death of a child do not always get support from their living children. I realize then that some things about being childless are perhaps not that different from those who have children. One dear friend has three children and several grown grandchildren for whom she often babysits, helps financially, and does things for. Yet, she often has to ask friends to mow her lawn or repair things that her children and grandchildren don't seem to notice need to be done.

I cried oceans of tears, told Rhonda's story and our grief story millions of times to thousands of different people, kept a journal—which is an invaluable tool of measuring one's progress—and allowed friends to help me when I needed help.

I read every book I could find on grief, devoured all the newsletters, and listened to tapes until I realized I really was not going crazy. I found that things I thought, did, forgot, or was angry about were very normal for a bereaved parent.

I have learned that it is vitally important to find a local bereavement support group and to attend regularly in those first years of grief. Getting involved and "giving back" to those who are more recently bereaved than we are help us find healing.

We started Alive Alone, Inc. in 1988 to be an additional support system for childless parents, and publish a periodical specifically written by and for childless parents. We help these parents to network with others whose child was approximately the same age or experienced a similar means of death. We work with other support groups to provide seminars and sharing sessions for their regional and national conferences so that the needs of childless parents are met. For more information, please e-mail [alivalon@bright.net](mailto:alivalon@bright.net) or see our website online at [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org).

Coping with the death of one's only child or all children is the most difficult experience anyone will ever encounter. But, it is possible to find a "new normal" and be able to reinvest in life again and find a new form of happiness.

*Kay and Rodney Bevington's only child, Rhonda, almost 16, died in 1980. Kay is a retired educator and bereavement specialist. They have been active members of the Van Wert, Ohio, TCF Chapter.*

*Lovingly Lifted from The National Magazine of the Compassionate Friend, We Need Not Walk Alone. Winter/Spring 2010-2011.*

# A Good Grief

For those who have lost...

By Catherine Patillo

Parents who have experienced the death of a child, especially the newly bereaved, might question the possibility of creating anything “good from grief. But a mother in Park City, Utah, is focused on just that. Molly Jackson has no misconceptions that she and her husband’s efforts will fill the aching void left from their daughter Lucy’s death. However, she does feel they can help other bereaved parents create a lasting memorial for their children *because* of the loss she and Vic experienced.

Back on the bright, sunny morning of May 18, 2008, the Jacksons’ lives couldn’t have been more different. In her blog, Molly paints a detailed and poignant picture of that morning: getting ready for church, Lucy’s desire to sit with a friend, and later, her subsequent fussiness when she returned to sit with Molly and Vic.

When the service was nearly over, and after many failed attempts to quiet Lucy, they decided to leave. After buckling their daughter into her car seat and handing her two small slices of apple, Molly started the car. Moments later, though, she heard Lucy choking. Molly ran to the backseat, and unbuckling her, called for Vic. He calmly took Lucy and administered the Heimlich maneuver, but soon after, realized it wasn’t helping. Vic ran to the fire station next door with Lucy in his arms and banged on the door, getting no response. Molly lagged behind Vic and in a panic, fell to the ground. Suddenly people were streaming out of the church, and she could feel them supporting her. She could hear talk of the possibility of a trach, and eventually the arrival of the fire truck and paramedics. Moments later a helicopter landed, and Lucy was flown to a hospital in Salt Lake. Friends followed with Molly, and after surgery she and Vic were shown the pea-sized piece of apple that had lodged in Lucy’s trachea. It was such a small thing; they were convinced their little fighter would make it.

Four days later, at 9:00 pm on Thursday, May 22, they realized Lucy had other plans. As Molly held her daughter in her arms, the organ donation team wheeled them down the hallway to the “yellow line” where she and Vic would say their good-byes.

Molly has always enjoyed writing. Friends thought she would quit after Lucy’s death, but Molly maintains her

decision to continue writing her blog has given her insight about herself, as well as providing a venue for support from family and friends. Her husband’s cousin eventually encouraged her to create a separate website about Lucy, and after brainstorming, they came up with the name A Good Grief. Through the site, Molly feels that her writing and that of guest authors has offered their readers thoughts in finding hope. “It has gotten easier. I didn’t think it would. I thought I’d always walk around with a gaping hole no one could see. You’re hungry for hope. Now I know there are ways you can choose hope.”

After Lucy’s death, Molly and Vic wanted to create a legacy in their daughter’s name from the many funds that were donated. They thought about lights in the waiting room at Primary Children’s Hospital, where Lucy has been treated, but they wanted her legacy to be something that would have special meaning to others. They thought about the bench they had made for Lucy at the cemetery, realizing how “sweet it was” to see her picture, and then it dawned on them. Through the A Good Grief website, they’d locate other bereaved parents who were having difficulty paying the cost of a headstone for their deceased child and contribute funds. As Molly says, “No parent should be further burdened. Headstones are expensive. We’ve been able to help several families so far, and have enough now to help another. This is a final monument to their child’s life. It’s not a time to have to scrimp. It’s not like a car or a shirt. You have to get the best.”

Long-term, Molly hopes to add more features to the A Good Grief website that will draw in more contributions. She’d like the site to be known nationally as an organization that helps in-need bereaved families pay for headstones. She wants these families to know that although they might feel they are alone, someone cares.

*Molly and Vic live in Park City, Utah, with their son, Peter (nearly two years old) and have attended TCF meetings in Salt Lake City, Utah. To find out more, visit their website at [www.agoodgrief.com](http://www.agoodgrief.com)*

*Lovingly Lifted from The National Magazine of the Compassionate Friend, [We Need Not Walk Alone](#). Winter/Spring 2010-2011.*





**Leadership**

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Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle 596-4275  
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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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