



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG  
WWW.COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG

MAY & JUNE 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

## IMPORTANT MEETING CHANGE

Albany Chapter's May meeting will be held on Tuesday, **MAY 23, 2017** at 7:30 pm

### FATHER'S DAY

Warm and sunny day in June,

Father's Day

Children, small and grown

give gifts to father

Say thanks to father

Say I love you.

But there are fathers whose

children are not here to give gifts

and says thanks

And say I love you.

Remember the fathers

Whose children are gone

Because all too often

They grieve in silence.

By Sascha Wagner

### Ask My Mom How She Is

My Mom, she tells a lot of lies,  
she never did before.

But from now until she dies,  
she'll tell a whole lot more.

Ask my Mom how she is and  
because she can't explain,

She will tell a little lie

because she can't describe the pain.

Ask my Mom how she is;  
she'll say "I'm alright."

If that's the truth, then tell me,  
Why does she cry each night?

Ask my Mom how she is;  
she seems to cope so well.

She didn't have a choice you see,  
Nor the strength to yell.

Ask my Mom how she is,  
"I'm fine. I'm well. I'm coping."

For God's sake Mom,

Just tell the truth,

just say your heart is broken.

She'll love me all her life.

I loved her all of mine.

But if you ask her how she is,  
She'll lie and say she's fine.

I am here in Heaven.

I cannot hug from here.

If she lies to you, don't listen, hug her  
and hold her near.

On the day we meet again,  
we'll smile and I'll be bold.

I'll say, "You're lucky to get in here,  
Mom, with all the lies you told!"

*Author Unknown*



# 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.

*The Compassionate Friends is about transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope. It takes people out of the isolation society imposes on the bereaved and lets them express their grief naturally. With the shedding of tears, healing comes. And the newly bereaved get to see people who have survived and are learning to live and love again.*

*-Simon Stephens, founder of The Compassionate Friends.*

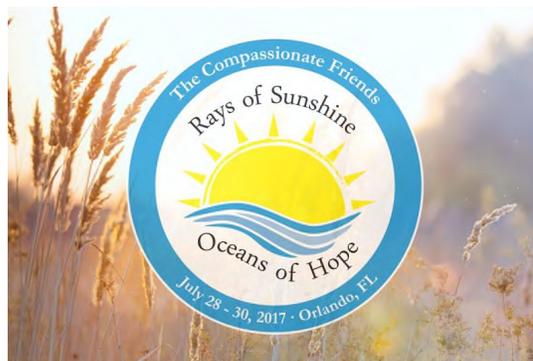
In loving memory of our daughter, the light in our lives, **NICOLE JENNIFER GRIEVES**, November 1983-June 2011. You'll be forever in our hearts.

Love, Mom & Dad  
(Vicki and Don Grieves)



In loving memory of our daughter, **STEPHANIE BOMEISL** on her 30th birthday!! Wishing you every bit of joy in Heaven that you brought us here on earth!!

Love, Mom, Dad, Rachel & Lauren



## 40th ANNUAL NATIONAL TCF CONVENTION

This year's National Convention will be held on July 28-30, 2017 in Orlando, Florida. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of this year's event. The 2017 conference will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. For registration information, conference schedule and a list of workshops, visit

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/40th-tcf-national-conference/>

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

# DEATH OF A CHILD CREATES AMBIGUOUS LOSSES

The car crash was bloody, a medical helicopter flew my daughter to the nearest hospital, where surgeons operated on her for 20 hours. Their efforts failed. “I’m sorry,” the lead surgeon said. “As soon as we fixed one problem another appeared. Your daughter is brain dead.” My husband and I made the decision no parent wants to make: we stopped all life support and met with an organ donation representative.

She wore a low-cut blouse, not appropriate dress for the situation, and every time she leaned over to point to something, her breasts were more exposed. It was an odd experience. Today, family members refer to this woman as “Mrs. Bosom.” As time passed, we appreciated our daughter’s planning even more. Thanks to her generosity, two lives were saved and two people can see.

Although I’d experienced grief before, my daughter’s death stunned me. Two days later, on the same weekend, my father-in-law died. About eight weeks later my brother died. Six months later, my former son-in-law died from the injuries he received in another car crash. His death made our twin grandchildren orphans and we became their guardians. Our challenge, the greatest one we ever faced, was to care for the twins, and grieve for family members simultaneously.

Because I’m a non-fiction writer, I turned to my occupation for information and comfort. During my journey I came across the work of Pauline Boss, PhD, Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota. Boss did the original research on something called ambiguous loss -- unclear, unacknowledged loss that “defies closure.” If you’re the parent of a missing child you are living with ambiguous loss. Family members whose loved ones died on September 11th also live with it, and will do so for the rest of their days.

In her book, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*, Boss describes ambiguous losses as “frozen grief.” There are two types of ambiguous loss, according to Boss, physical absence with psychological presence (lack of a goodbye), and psychological absence with physical presence, as with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia.

Ambiguous loss is exhausting. It goes on and on, you don’t know how long it will last, family dynamics may change, there’s a lack of problem solving, and no closure. You’re on pins and needles and the pain seems unbearable. I found comfort in a Japanese proverb: To endure what is unendurable is true endurance. Bereaved parents like you and me suffer many ambiguous losses. Since I’m a visual person, I sat down and made a list of them.

**Loss of a future.** My daughter was a composite engineer, earned six special certifications, and an MBA. She managed three production lines in a manufacturing plant, received outstanding reviews, and was assured of advancement in the company. Then she died. I lost a future with her. You have lost a future and worse, family members and friends may not understand your feelings. They may even ask you not to mention your child’s name.

**Loss of friends.** Grief is off-putting and most Americans don’t like to talk about it. After my daughter died some friends stuck around and others slowly drifted away. Today, in the ninth year of life without my daughter, I am my disabled husband’s caregiver, and more isolated than ever. I try to stay in touch with friends via email and social media, but these aren’t the same as face-to-face meetings.

**Loss of a social life.** Multiple losses erased my interest in socializing. I remembered something my mother once said: “I want to crawl in a hole and pull the hole in after me.” Like my mother, I wanted to crawl in a hole, stay home, and ponder life. As the years passed, we resumed many of our social contacts. Still, there were days when we felt out of touch. My current caregiving duties make me feel more out of touch.

**Loss of purpose.** “Who am I now?” is a question I often asked myself, I didn’t know what to say when people asked me how many children I had. While I was raising my twin grandchildren my purpose was clear, to protect, nurture, and love them. My purpose became less clear after the twins graduated from college and found jobs. Finally, I identified two purposes, caring for my husband and writing resources to help others.

**Loss of hope.** I admit it; I lost hope for a while. Thankfully, the empty feeling didn’t last long. My grandchildren (one boy, one girl) helped me find hope again, and renewed my enthusiasm for the ordinary things of life. In his helpful and hopeful book, *Living When a Loved One Has Died*, Earl A. Grollman notes that life isn’t fair. “You must find a way to live with an unfair life — to live without the one you loved,” he writes. I learned to do this.

*continued on page 4*

## DEATH OF A CHILD

...continued from page 3

What can you do about ambiguous losses? Start by making a list of your losses as I did. Learn more about this unique form of grief. Talk with others who have experienced ambiguous losses and find out what worked for them. Many grief counselors recommend journaling as a healing step. Believe in yourself, because you're probably stronger than you think. I love what Martha Beck writes about grief in her book, *Following Your Own North Star*.

When the compass reads grief, Beck says we need to remember that sadness is a form of healing. She thinks the people who follow the course of grief become stronger, healthier, and have better coping skills. As she explains, "Grief pushes us into 'deep rest,' weighing down our muscles, wringing tears from our eyes and sobs from our guts. It isn't pretty, but it's nature's way." Our children would want us to be happy; and we can let happiness back into our lives today.

*Harriet Hodgson is the author of 37 books, including, Smiling Through Your Tears: Anticipating Grief, Lois Krahn, MD, co-author, Writing to Recover: The Journey from Loss and Grief to a New Life, Writing to Recover Journal, 101 Affirmations to Ease Your Grief Journey; Words of Comfort, Words of Hope. The Spiritual Woman: Quotes to Refresh and Sustain Your Soul, Help! I'm Raising My Grandkids: Grandparents Adapting to Life's Surprises, and Happy Again! Your New and Meaningful Life after Loss. Visit [www.harriethodgson.com](http://www.harriethodgson.com) for more information about this busy author.*

*This story was lovingly lifted from We Need Not Walk Alone, Spring/Summer 2016. The national magazine of The Compassionate Friends, Inc. [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)*

### The Significance of Mother's Day

I don't think I really appreciated the significance of Mother's Day until I myself became one. My life would never be the same, and the death of my only child did not alter the fact that I am still a mother. I still have that intense feeling of love for my child, a love greater than any I had known before. So, as Mother's Day approaches, a day on which we recognize the love and pride of motherhood, I, too, want to be remembered as a mother.

By Ginny Smith

TCF Charlottesville, VA

### IN RESPONSE TO A MESSAGE 'ONE BALLOON'

I, too, have wondered who finds the balloons we send to our children. We released balloons last year for Melanie's first birthday in Heaven. But this year, being her 21st birthday, we, Melanie's best friend, Lisa, and I wanted to do something special to honor her. So, like last year, we sent up balloons, but I borrowed an idea from another parent. Each balloon carried inside Forget-Me-Not flower seeds. I like to think that when the balloons burst that the seeds dropped to earth and Forget-Me-Not flowers will soon grow in memory of Melanie.

Then I remembered something that my oldest daughter had done when she was in the 2nd grade. Her class had a balloon send off with notes attached. The notes asked the person who found the balloon to please send it back to the student. The school wanted to see how far the balloons would travel and how many they would get back. I don't know how many were found, but about a year and a half later, Trinity's was returned. It had been found by a farmer plowing his field.

So we attached notes, with a return address label, to each of the balloons. I was eager to find out if anyone would find one of our balloons. About a week later, I received in the mail, one of the balloons. It had been found the next day in a neighboring state. A bank president found it in his parking space. At first he said he thought it was just trash but discovered it was my balloon. He took the time out to mail the balloon back to me with a very nice letter.

He wrote that he took the note into the bank and shared the message with his co-workers. He said after reading the note that there wasn't a dry eye left in the house. That everyone had been moved by the message and what it stood for. He just recently lost his father and was dealing with his own pain and grief. He said he had a young daughter and understood some of what I was feeling.

I hope in some small way that finding Melanie's message might have brought him some small comfort. And I gained some comfort knowing that my balloons were not sent up in vain. That they had reached out to someone else in pain.

*Kathy Thompson (Melanie's Mama)  
May 11, 1979-February 15, 1999*

## I'll always be your Dad

Years have come and gone and time has drifted by.  
I've searched for any answer yet  
I'm left to wonder why.  
The only thing I know for sure through the happy and  
the sad, no what the circumstances,  
I will always be your Dad.

Not a day goes by that I don't hold you in my heart.  
My love reaches far beyond this space we are apart.  
These empty arms remember  
all the good times we had.  
I may be standing here alone, but  
I will always be your Dad.

Some won't understand so I don't bother to explain.  
They look into my eyes, but they never feel the pain.  
Afraid to look too deep as they are blinded by the fear.  
If only they could know a father's love  
won't disappear.

So when this road gets lonely and the journey seems  
too hard, and I get to feeling sorry  
That I didn't get a card,  
I'll close my eyes and I can almost hear you say,  
I love you and I miss you daddy...  
HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

*By Alan Pedersen  
TCF Ocean County, NJ*

## Please Remember Andy

When the jitters come  
On graduation day  
When the sun burns bright  
In the month of May  
When the tassels hang  
And gowns gently sway

## Please Remember Andy

When you walk across the stage  
And the crowd is all a-rage  
When joyous tears begin to fall  
And you think you've conquered all  
When the caps begin to fly  
And you tell your school good-bye

## Please Remember Andy

When later in the day  
You and your friends go out to play

when the music blasts all night  
When you're drunk beyond a doubt  
Don't take your car keys out  
Whether you drink a little or a lot  
Accidents happen more often than not

## Please...Remember Andy

*Lovingly lifted from TCF Pikes Peak Chapter  
Colorado Springs*



*Dedicated to the  
children who  
graduated only in our  
hearts.*

## Bent but not Broken

To a mother who has lost her only child, or has no surviving children, the thought of Mother's Day sends a stabbing pain that only those of us who are in this situation can understand. We begin to notice Mother's Day cards slipping in right after Valentine's Day along with the Easter cards. Even before Easter the TV advertising starts. We try to block this all out, but our subconscious keeps reminding us the day is coming closer.

For the first two years after my daughter Shawna's death, we celebrated Mother's Day for my mom and my sister very quietly. The third year, we decided to go to a local restaurant. We arrived early to avoid the crowd. The hostess greeted and seated us. She asked the question, "How many Mothers?" Someone managed to stammer out "Three. Three Mothers." She handed us each a flower. She didn't notice the one she gave me was pretty battered. My sister wanted to give me hers or get another. "No." I said, "it's ok," The stem was bent, but not broken completely. A wilted, tired flower was hanging from the stem.

I brought it home and propped it up in a glass of water to revive it. You see, I could identify with that flower. As a mother without my child, I have felt so bruised and battered. Somehow, through all the pain, tears and loneliness, like this flower, I have been bent, but never quite broken.

*By Donna Frecheck, Enld, OK  
Lovingly lifted from A Journey Together  
National Newsletter of Bereaved Parents of the USA,  
Volume XVI, Spring 2011*



**Leadership**

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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.



You need not walk alone

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[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

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