



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
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JULY-AUGUST 2018

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

FOURTH OF JULY

It's the Fourth again and time for the beach,
but that past joy is beyond my reach.
She laughed in the waves and ran in the sand,
begging for us to hold her hand.

The sand toys are away,
the pails and the balls,
along with the memories of giggles and calls.



The fireworks are no longer so bright,
the oohs and the aahs don't seem right.
It's the Fourth again and time to cheer,
but it's so much harder since she's not here.

*Diane Goldsmith
TCF Heart of Florida*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the Date!! The Schenectady Chapter of the Compassionate Friends is planning a second annual afternoon retreat on September 23rd. As the date gets closer, we will post information on our website.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany will host its first Emmaus Ministry (faith based) day-long retreat for bereaved parents on November 17th in Schenectady. Registration details will be available in September.



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.

“It has been said time heals all wounds...I do not agree. The wounds remain. In time, the mind protecting its sanity covers them with scar tissue and the pain lessens, but it’s never gone...”

Rose Kennedy

LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER: August 20, 2018

In loving memory of our son JIMMY - 02/1980 - 6/2011
(Joe & JoAnn Landers)

In loving memory of JASMINE JOHNSON, who will always be my sunshine in August.
Aunt Dale



Daisies in Huge Handfuls

“Pick more daisies” was the most popular expression in our family. I picked it up from a magazine article about a 94 year-old lady in Kentucky who, when asked what she would do differently if she had her life to live over, responded “I would take more chances; I would eat more ice cream and less beans; I would have more real troubles but fewer imaginary ones; I would climb more mountains; I would swim more rivers, and I would pick more daisies.”

Our son, Mark, seized the daisy expression as the theme both for his life and his entrance exam essay at UCLA. It helped him live his brief 18 years; his essay helped him get an academic scholarship.

Daisies became our family flower. They marked our attitude about living. And they marked our son’s memorial service. After it was over, his friends and fraternity brothers each threw a daisy into the ocean. Daisies still mark his grave every week. It has taken me almost two years to return to really thinking about daisies and what the quote by a 94 year-old lady really means. During that time, I made a pretty big mess of things. I did the best I could, but I was often going through the motions outside, but empty inside.

To me, what this quote means is we really do have to pull ourselves together again and go on. Dr. Charles Heuser, a former pastor at our church, notes “going through the steps of grief is like walking through the valley and shadow of death. Keep walking, but don’t camp there.”

Our children would not want us to “camp there,” but to go pick more daisies -- to somehow live an even more meaningful life in their name. As I go on, I am truly a different person. I don’t suffer fools or superficiality very well any more. As one of my best friends said...“I get tired of beige people.” Yet, I will drop everything to help another bereaved parent. I certainly have more “real troubles and fewer imaginary ones.” But it’s OK -- I like myself better that way.

And I am returning to embrace life each day again. But this time I am following my heart instead of my expected career. I am taking more chances, climbing more unfamiliar mountains, and picking daisies in huge handfuls.



Mark would want it so.

*Rich Edler
TCF South Bay, LA, CA*

When You Lose An Only Child

The loss of an only child is neither greater nor less than the loss of one of many children. However, the loss of an only child is experienced differently. It is different because you lose your parenthood, which is such a large part of the life of any parent.

1. With the death of an only child, you lose the one person who could use all of the love you had to give every hour of every day. One of the secrets of parenthood is that from birth, children teach us that we have a greater capacity for unselfish love than we thought possible. When your only child dies, you may feel that you are drowning in the parental love your heart continues to generate for the child you have lost.

2. With the death of an only child, you lose so much of your own future that was tied to your child's future. The first day of school, sports, learning to drive, a first crush, a first date, a first heartbreak, high school, college, career, marriage, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren. Your only child lost all of this from his or her future. And so did you.

3. With the death of an only child, you suffer many tiny losses that cause pain only another grieving parent can comprehend. You have lost the joy of checking the cereal aisle to see if Cocoa Puffs are on sale. You have lost the reason to keep up with the top ten hits on the pop music charts. You have lost the joy of caring what prize is in a box of Cracker Jacks. You have lost the joy of getting up early on a Saturday morning for kids' soccer, basketball, or bowling. You have lost the reason to hope for December snow. You have lost the person who thought you made the best cocoa on a cool December evening. For me, I lost a gentle, kind,

generous child who loved, watched for, and shared beautiful sunsets.

The loss of an only child is a devastating loss. Your child has lost his or her life. And you have lost an important piece of your own life, your parenthood. The Compassionate Friends chapter near you is there to help you acknowledge and grieve these losses by sharing your pain with others who have known their own pain.

*Bill Snapp
TCF Atlanta (Tucker)
In Memory of My Son, Bill Snapp*

I REMEMBER

I remember the toys,
The fun and games
Playing in the rain,
I remember the baseball games
Calling each other names.
The memories are so vast,
But always in the past.
The future holds no more,
Time has closed that door.
A part of my past you'll always be,
The future has been taken from me.
One day we'll meet again.
'Til then
You're in my heart, my mind & soul.
I'll love you forevermore.

*Becke Adam-Hammack
TCF Louisville, KY*

July 4th "Freedom" for Bereaved Parents

July 4th. . . Independence Day. . .

A day most Americans celebrate their freedom. For bereaved parents, unfortunately, freedom of the body is far different than freedom of the mind.

Before our children died we knew we had the freedom to. . .

Watch them take their first step

Listen for their first word

Watch them step onto the school bus for the first time.

Watch them go on their first date.

Watch them graduate.

Watch them walk down the aisle to be married.

See our grandchildren be born.

For bereaved parents these freedoms are gone forever.

Why did we have to lose these freedoms? Sometimes we lose these freedoms because the world has the wrong priorities. Sometimes we lose them because people abuse their freedom.

What freedoms must be changed?

...the freedom of cancer to strike our children

...the freedom of a drunk driver to be put back on the road with a slap on the wrist

...the freedom of AIDS and other diseases to run rampant

...the freedom of criminal students to obtain guns and kill their classmates

...the freedom of drivers to ignore the speed limits with impunity

...and on and on and on.

When these freedoms are exercised and we are unable to stop them, the deaths of our children destroy our freedom to pursue happiness in our lives.

Our country, of the people, by the people, and for the people, must wake up to the fact that freedom is a fragile commodity. As bereaved parents, we have become a living testimony to this fact.

*Wayne Loder
TCF Lake Area MI*

DANNY

Our only child passed away at the age of twelve. His death was unexpected, and the pain almost unbearable. Our pastor told us that yellow is the color of life. What then could be more fitting than yellow roses.

To ensure these symbols of life for years to come, I bought a rose bush for my wife. After all, she was still Danny's mom and needed more than ever to be reminded of that.

I planted the bush on Mother's Day. On the day before Father's Day, the roses bloomed -- three of them, to be exact. They were arranged in size order, just as our family had been in life. When I bought the bush, there was no way to know that there were to be only three roses. I have no doubt this was a sign from Danny. He wanted us to know that he still lives, and that there are still three roses.

*John W. Carlsen
In memory of Danny
Reprinted from Bereavement Magazine
5125 N. Union Blvd, Ste. 4
Colorado Spring, Colorado*



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Five Things a Firefighter/Medic

Wants You to Know

Moms and Dads, can I talk to you for a minute? I was too busy during the emergency, and afterward — well, you both had more important matters to attend to. It doesn't matter whether you live in Pacific Northwest or Florida, Maine or Kansas City. If your child was taken from you suddenly, there was probably someone like me in attendance who fights fires and delivers medical aid for a living. Chances are they've struggled with the same feelings I struggle with. Here are five things I'd like to tell you. It's my hope that something I say will make your struggle through grief a little easier to manage.

#1 –Your Child Was Not “Just Another Patient”

Perhaps you assume that because I've seen thousands of patients in my career, I wouldn't remember your son or daughter. Not true! Only the loss of a fellow firefighter affects us more profoundly than a child's death. When I lose a child in the line of duty, I don't leave the experience at the station. You're child's face comes home with me. I see him when I'm fishing, working in my garage, or just drifting off to sleep. I can still recall vividly the hour I spent with a little girl from a car accident almost fourteen years ago. She has a permanent place in my memory, just like your little one. (It's the inability to come to terms with these memories that drives many a firefighter from his or her career. Those of us who are old-timers in emergency medicine have learned to deal with the tragic cruelties of life we must face. Some exercise vigorously. Others, like me, write about our experiences. Sadly, there are some who are unable to cope with the pain and turn to drugs or alcohol.)

#2 - I Did More Than Provide Medical Care

When I am fighting to save a child, I talk to them. It doesn't make any difference whether they're responding or not. I reassure and attempt to comfort them. If they're awake and very young, I give them a stuffed animal to hold. I do one other thing. I tell them that their mom and dad love them very much. I do this because several years ago, a mother told me “I would've given anything to tell my son I loved him just one last time.” Since then, I try to tell every child that you, their parents, love them very much.

#3 - I Struggle With Feelings Of Failure and Inadequacy

When a firefighter/paramedic loses a child, he or she may struggle with personal feelings of failure. So often

we repeatedly ask ourselves “what if” questions. “What if I'd been at a closer station? What if I'd arrived five minutes sooner? What if I'd tried another course of treatment?” It's these feelings of inadequacy that often keep a medic from approaching the parents of his patient. If a firefighter seems to be avoiding eye contact, he likely is not only struggling with his emotions, but possibly struggling with the feeling that he has failed. It's a common occurrence, despite the fact that the medic may have performed flawlessly.

#4 - I Grieve With You

Macho, as we'd like to portray ourselves, we are by nature a group of men and women sincerely touched by the sorrow and suffering of others. That's one of the reasons we are drawn to the fire service in the first place. We have a deep, burning drive to make a difference, to alter tragedy in the making if we possibly can. Maybe it's because we feel we have an image to uphold. Whatever the reason, we firefighters tend to be good at holding our grief in check until we are alone. We present a tough-as-steel façade and inevitably do our crying in the station's hose tower or the compressor room where no one can hear us.

#5 - I'm Available to Answer Questions

So often there are procedures or treatments you may not understand. They are almost always done for a very good reason, and with your child's best interest in mind. Almost without exception, the firefighters and medics who fought to save your child would be happy to answer any questions you may have. We also need to be informed when we unknowingly make comments that hurt or offend.

I won't make the mistake of telling you I know how you feel. I can try to imagine your pain, but I'm sure I could never know how it really feels unless I'd lost one of my children. I can tell you that I, and all my fellow firefighters, do care. It is the chance that we will save the next victim of tragedy that keeps us doing what we're doing in the face of so much sorrow. We wish for your strength and peace on your journey.

By: Aaron Espy, firefighter/paramedic

Aaron Espy is a Firefighter/Paramedic in Kitsap County, Washington. A professional firefighter since 1980 and is also a freelance writer and poet. Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national publication of The Compassionate Friends.





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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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