



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

JULY-AUGUST 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

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.



The National Chapter of the Compassionate Friends has decided to hold a virtual conference on Friday, July 31, 2020 to Sunday, August 2, 2020. The three-day conference will include:

- Keynote Sessions
- 70 plus workshop choices
- Sibling Sunday
- Candle Lighting Ceremony
- Sharing Circles
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment

Additional Information:

- The conference will take place on a Zoom platform with an online registration system.
- Registration fees for the three-day event will be \$65 per person (early bird registration) and \$85 per person after July 17, 2020.
- Information about the TCF Walk to Remember along with more conference details will be shared in the coming weeks.
- Training and orientation will be offered prior to the conference for attendees who may need some extra technology support in order to participate.

For more information and to register, go to: <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/43rd-tcf-national-conference/>



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.

This section is reserved for Love Gifts given in honor of your child. You can post a special message to your child right here and even include a picture. Your Love Gift donations help to fund the activities of our Albany Chapter. Please consider giving a donation today. (See the left side page for instructions). Thank you.

SOMETIMES

Sometimes,

Memories are like rain showers
Sprinkling down upon you
Catching you unaware.
And then they are gone,
Leaving you warm and refreshed.

Sometimes,

Memories are like thunderstorms
Beating down upon you,
Relentless in their downpour.
And then they will cease,
Leaving you tired and bruised.

Sometimes,

Memories are like shadows
Sneaking up behind you,
Following you around.
Then they disappear,
Leaving you sad and confused.

Sometimes,

Memories are like comforters
Surrounding you with warmth
Luxuriously abundant.
And sometimes they stay,
Wrapping you in contentment.

-Marcia Updyke

Mo-Kan Region, May-June '04

I'LL NEVER BE THE SAME

Confusion reigns within my heart, within my soul, because I know I cannot ever be the woman I once was. How can I be complete and whole when part of me is gone....A special part...A precious part...The part that was my son? Conceived in love, how gratefully I bore you...filled with pride: a bit of my heart, a bit of my soul went with you when you died. One cannot lose a child to death and still remain the same, untouched by tears of emptiness, undaunted by the pain. The cruelest nightmares come to pass, life's bitterest pill to swallow. In light of this, I can endure all else that's left to follow. There's nothing that can fill the empty spaces that remain, I've tried and failed so many times, I cannot try again. No trying to regain the past...that's all a bitter sham...it's time that I resign myself to being who I am. To be the woman I've become (Not acting out a part)...A mother with a shattered dream and a broken heart.

Peggy Kociscin
Albuquerque, NM

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

THE STORMS OF GRIEF

I've often thought about how differently grief affects those left behind when someone has died. To me, there are three groups of bereaved. There are those that lost someone they loved very much and are most affected. The middle group are those that cared about the person and will miss them, but their death doesn't change their lives. The third group are sorry that the person has died, but are largely unaffected by their death.

Now envision those groups on a mountain. When my son died, I felt like I was on a mountaintop, alone with a storm raging around me. Thunder and lightning filled the sky, thick clouds enveloped me, and a cold hard rain fell upon me. Winds buffeted my body from every side. There was no shelter, no place to sit or lie down. Others who were suffering as much as I (my husband and daughters) were on their own mountaintop, and we could derive no comfort from each other. I stood there, sometimes railing against God, sometimes feeling as if my heart had been ripped out, sometimes just feeling an emptiness so deep, I feared I would drown in it. Days, weeks, months passed.

The middle group of people stood on the side of the mountain (close friends and relatives). They also were caught in the storm, but they had some shelter and each other. They wanted to comfort me but the path upward was winding and rocky and I could find no path down to them.

The last group of people were at the bottom of the mountain in the valley. There, the sun was shining and the breeze was gentle. They could see the storm I was caught in, but could do nothing to help me.

Sometimes the storm would subside and I could see something besides dismal gray and I had respite from the wind and rain. But this would be followed by another raging storm. Back and forth, I never knew what to expect.

Eventually, the sky would clear and I was able to find a path to those that cared and could offer me hugs and a shoulder to cry on. The storm was still there, but there was also shelter and I wasn't alone.



It has been 12 years since Todd died and I have been able to come completely down off that desolate mountaintop and live in the valley of sunshine. Sometimes I stay there quite a while. Sometimes I climb that mountain and experience that same emptiness and sadness.

We all know that this kind of storm may brew on those special days — birthdays, holidays, family events. We are also blind-sided by those times that just take our breath away...being in a place they loved, hearing their music, smells, movies, ballgames, seeing their friends. We really have no control over these unexpected, sudden storms.

I have learned to give into them and let the tears fall. I can live with these storms and accept them as part of my life because my child lived and I loved him with all my heart. I cannot change the fact that my child has died and I will not change my love.

Barb Seth

TCF Madison, WI

In memory of my son, Todd

Starting Over Again

As parents, how many times have we told our children to try, try again? "You can do it, just start over," we'd say, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, learning to tie shoes, school assignments, or later, other difficulties that life brings.

Little did we think that this well-meaning advice we gave out of love for our children's well-being would be the words that we must follow. Hang on. Don't give up. Try again, and start over. All this now applies

to us. Had the situation been reversed, we would not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain, and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue, not in constant sorrow, but with hope for renewal and better days ahead.

As we have said to them -- they would be throwing it right back to us -- it is a hard road that you must travel, but you can do it.

What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to, to find your way out of the dark tunnel, and when you fail pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it. What we wanted for our children is no less than they would want for us. If we could hear them, right now, they would be saying: LIVE, for life is not a moment. LOVE, for this is what really matters. GO ON, for we shall be together again, someday.

Mary Ann L.

TCF Gloucester County, NJ

BECOMING MELANCHOLY

How My Grandson's Death Changed the Way I Live
By Patricia Mealer

I continue to learn and grow as this new person I have become, a griever making my re-entry back into life among those untouched by loss. In adjusting to the new me, I have come to accept things about myself that at first I assumed were temporary. I now know that I am permanently changed.

Self-awareness is a good thing. If grief has provided anything positive, it would be the soul-searching that I needed to do in order to overcome my loss. Grief shatters you, tears you apart. Rips open your soul, breaks your heart and forces you to open your eyes. When I was able to put myself back together, I found my perception of everything had been completely altered.

Grief makes you aware, hyper-aware. You become more of who you really are and you see the truth of who others are as well.

In this new state of being I tend to over-analyze everything. Not to be weighed as right or wrong or to judge, but to prevent the mental unrest that may unintentionally harm my fragile psyche.

I find myself living a life mostly melancholy. Although I have consistently tried to resume an overtly happy life. I now realize this was also misguided. There is absolutely nothing wrong with living my life the way I am. It is not a dishonor to Konnor to be sad at times. I am, in fact, honoring him when I have moments of sadness because I am expressing my love for him. To continue to falsely create a façade of a life that does not exist would be a mockery.

I am doing much better than I was. I am, for the most part, happier now. I can laugh when something is funny. I smile more. For this I feel

proud considering where I was two years ago. I am settling into myself, content in who I am. Shaped my grief but surviving by my love for my family and everything that is left in the here and now.

Grieving and feeling melancholy has turned me into a deeply emotional human being. Some handle loss well and manage to go unscathed. For me, the changes I have felt within myself are irrevocable. I am emotional. I am aware. I am more alive now having experienced the trauma of death.

I am blessed to experience a sunrise, my grandchildren, a beautiful song. It doesn't bother me to feel everything so deeply. So what if I cry more than the average person. I get melancholy. I know what it means to lose someone I treasured and thought so beautiful.

Being melancholy does not mean I am depressed or sad. It is not a mood. It is a state of being. It is loving your family more. It is recognizing beauty unnoticed before. It is hearing a song and crying because it brings forth a memory whether good or bad. It is a feeling of stillness, fullness while at the same time experiencing emptiness, numbness. Melancholy is staring off into space, lost in your own thoughts in a room full of people. It's that lump in your throat and the ache in your chest.

I have adjusted to the overwhelming emotions I can experience. **I am comfortable with who I have become. Truth be told, I would rather feel so much more than care less in a world that at times can seem so cold.**

When sadness knows the reason of tears, heart prepares to carry the aches for years." - Munia Khan.

Patricia is an RN, mother of 4, grandmother to 7, one being Konnor Mason, who passed suddenly November 22, 2015, at 8 years old of gastric perforation caused by a very rare bacteria.

Lovingly lifted from the National Magazine of The Compassionate Friends, Autumn/Winter 2019

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.

You are able to say to yourself,

"I have lived through the horror.

I can take the next thing that comes along."

You must do the things you think you cannot do.

Eleanor Roosevelt

The Graduation Party

You've been gone so long. I couldn't feel the spirit of you over my sadness. My grief was taking me further away from you. Then you came to me. Just as I remembered you. Laughing, shining eyes. Moving so gracefully. So Alive, it made me happy just to look at you, for I hadn't seen you that clearly in years.

It would soon be your brother's graduation, and I wondered how I would get through it without crying for you. "YOU should be here...YOU should be part of this," I cried.

"HAVE A PARTY!" You bounced the words at me. "No," I said. "You were our party person." We could hardly have company over, especially without you egging us on. But as the days went by, those words continued to gnaw a me, or was it you?

Last night your brother graduated. We had a BIG party...lots of friends, lots of laughter, lots of memories and YOU. The banner, the balloons, all were touches from you. For a while you were back with us. It felt so good.

*Lynn Kulp,
TCF, Sonoma County, CA*

No Vacation

There is no vacation from your absence.
Every morning I awake
I am a bereaved parent,
Every noon I feel the hole in my heart
Every evening my arms are empty.
My life is busy now, but not quite full.
My heart is mended, but not quite healed.
For the rest of my life every moment will be lived without you.
There is no vacation from your absence.

*Kathy Boyette
TCF, Mississippi Gulf Coast*



Troubled Child

I was so scared to tell them about you.
I felt so ashamed.
You were a "troubled child",
Not perfect like all the rest.
Stories of children loved by everyone.
Sons and daughters with such promising futures.
Even though you were not like them,
You were my baby.
Even though you got into trouble and took drugs,
I was always by your side.
Even though you spent time in jail,
You could not have been loved more.
At time you were so frustrating
And seemed all bad.
Then you would do something wonderful,
And I knew you loved us.
I don't feel ashamed anymore,
It didn't matter what you did or who you were,
You were my child,
And did not deserve to die.
I Love You,
Mom

*Gretchen Wasson
Lovingly lifted from Bereaved Parents of the USA
Western New York Chapters
Spring 2007 newsletter*

Suicide

Once you were rich with life.
You were self-confident
And filled with beauty.
Until a darkness came,
To seize your mind,
A force from out of silence,
An ache without a reason,
A pain without a name.
What was this darkness that
Would not be conquered?
What force,
What reason,
What pain without a name
Would use your hands
To take your life away.
Once you were rich with life,
You were self-confident
And filled with beauty.
Now we are left alone,
Without an answer.

Sascha Wagner



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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