



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
WWW.COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG

MAY-JUNE 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

Companion Sojourners

The dictionary defines the word “sojourn” as temporary place where one may stop, rest, visit, dwell, abide and lodge. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of fellow sojourners. At our monthly meetings we stop for a while to find respite from a world that does not understand what it means to lose a child. We find a safe dwelling where there are others who are just like us. We don’t need to have any special skills to be a sojourner. As bereaved parents, we instinctively reach out to

one another. Those of us who have been on our journey for a while are drawn to comfort the others who have more recently embarked on their path of grief. We don’t need to say any special words. A discerning look, a listening ear, or a gentle touch can be all the other person needs to give them a moment’s solace. We are companion sojourners, wounded healers and compassionate friends.

Janet Reyes

TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Another Sweet Good-Bye

Some people stay in your mind, haunting you, lingering in your thoughts. I met such a mother at a Compassionate Friends meeting some time back. She was fearful, frightened, heart-broken and very specific about her wishes. Her only child had died, and this was her first Compassionate Friends meeting.

She then faithfully attended meetings, listening to others and absorbing what was said and occasionally contributing. One evening she connected with the guilt that every parent feels when a child dies. It matters not that we couldn’t control the circumstances. What matters is that our child has died. We feel guilt. We say, “If only...” so many times that it is almost a mantra.

Her body language changed instantly. I noticed that her head was up, her shoulders were back. Her subconscious had acknowledged that her feelings were the same as every

other mother’s feelings. Imagined guilt can wear us down.

Three months later she called me. She wanted to inform me that she had identified the monster that had been eating at her for this long time. Her conscious mind had accepted what her subconscious mind had known.

While I will miss her sharp repartee and the smile that began gracing her face, I know that we have served our purpose. She had been freed from the demon of an irrational emotion. Now she keeps her child in her heart as she gently and graciously moves through this life.

The paradigm of Compassionate Friends is the opposite of the paradigm of life. We are sad to see you when you arrive. We are happy when you are ready to go. You have found your way, this makes the good-bye a sweet one.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

TCF Katy, TX

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.

*[To bereaved Parents]
Graduation is a painful reminder of lost Promise and Potential*

**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:
June 20, 2018**



LOVE GIFTS

Living on in our hearts.

In loving memory of **TOM CHRISTOPHER**, who went home on 3/29/90 at 24 years old. I am so grateful to have had my son for his growing up years.

Prayerfully, his Mother (Elaine Christopher)

In loving memory of **MIKE CANTY** (9/11/01) & **JIM CANTY** (4/25/17) (Kathryn Canty)

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

Love, Mom and Dad (Vicki and Don Grieves)



The Compassionate Friends National Conference is a weekend spent surrounded by other bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. It is a place where hope grows and friendships are made with others who truly understand. With inspirational keynote speakers, abundant workshops for everyone's wants and needs, and a remembrance candle lighting program culminating with the annual Walk to Remember, this time of healing and hope is the gift we give ourselves.



41st TCF National Conference
St. Louis, MO • July 27-29, 2018

The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel on July 27-29, 2018. For more information and to register for the conference, visit <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/event/41st-national-conference/>

Graduation Day

It's June and graduation time again. Your child would have been among those wearing the cap and gown, walking down the aisle to the ever stirring "Pomp and Circumstance". Now there will be a vacant spot in the line. Should you attend? Can you stand the pain? Will people think you're strange?

As always, you must follow your heart. So go if you'd like to, and don't hide your tears. It's quite all right to miss your own child while celebrating the achievements of others. Just remember that your own instincts are the most important ones, that no one can make this decision for you, and that it doesn't really matter what other people think of you. It was your child who died. This is your pain, and you have the right to feel it and deal with it in your own way—and may a bit more healing take place in the doing.

*Peggy Gibson
TCF Nashville, TN*

Come Sit With Me

Come sit with me awhile
and let me hold your hand,
I understand your sorrow
and know you need a friend.
I understand the pain
that lies within your heart,
I have felt the silent screams
that tear you all apart
I know about the sleepless nights
that last so very long,
I understand the emptiness
when you hear that special song.
Come share with me your memories



and let me be your friend,
you can cry, laugh or
say nothing at all,
And I will understand.
Come sit with me my friend,
I'll try to help you through.
I understand my friend,
for I have been there too.

*Judy Peckinpaugh
TCF Inland Empire, CA*

In Remembrance of John

One bright day he went off to war
my precious first-born son,
To battle in an alien land
In a war that would never be won.

As he said good-bye on that fateful day,
My eyes were filled with tears.
He looked so young to be leaving home,
Younger than his nineteen years.

The months passed slowly, week by week,
The news was ever grim.
Despite my prayer, the fear was there
At the thought of losing him.

Then, one sad day, it came to pass
The knock upon the door.
My dear, brave boy—the one I loved
Would be with me no more.

He died heroically, I'm told
A good soldier to the end.
He never lost his faith in God.
And to all he was a friend.

Now his name is engraved on that
famous wall
For any and all to see.
But, in my aching heart, I wish
That he was here with me.

*Susan Herndon, John's Mom
BP/USA Marion County Chapter*

Mother's Day A Father's View

In our house as in other bereaved parents' households, Mother's Day comes with mixed emotions.

Setting aside a day to honor motherhood is only right: Mothers do tend to be taken for granted. I remember the childhood joy of getting my mother a special gift, even if that gift was nothing more than a crayon drawing. As an adult, buying gifts for your mother and the mother of your children still brings back those happy childhood memories.

But this changed after Erin died. Looking through all the cards at the gift shop only reminds me of this irony. Cute, humorous and sweetly sentimental cards await the bereaved father shopping for his grieving wife. I can't find the card that will comfort my wife on this day, and even worse, I'm afraid that I'll buy a card that will bring back only painful memories of the child she lost.

I realize this day, perhaps because it is widely celebrated, can even years later take my wife back to grieving she thought she was "through with".

I can never do enough on Mother's day; maybe I try to do too much, I know, of course, that all the cards, gifts, flowers and messy breakfasts in the world can't make up for the loss of our child. But, I can remind her that she is a great mother, a loving mother and most importantly, she is still the mother of the child we lost.

If she's happy on Mother's Day, I will try my best to keep her there. If she's depressed, I'll try to cheer her up as best I can even though I feel I'm not very good at it. This, then, is the wish I have for her and for all other bereaved mothers on this day: Please be as happy (and proud) as every other mother today; no one can dispute the fact that you brought your child into the world. Although that child is no longer with you, the love you had for her or him remains and can never be taken away from you. If you should be depressed, may there be family and friends there to remind you of this and comfort you.

*To Chris and to you
Happy Mother's Day
Al Bots
TCF, Cleveland/SW Suburbs*

Balloon Launch

I took some words from my heart today.
I let the ink fill out the letters on my card
"I love you," it read,
and simply added,
"I miss you."

I had pondered how to fill that blank space with words of you.

I wondered whether to speak of laughter
or of tears,

To speak of hopes or of dreams
and came to this,

**I LOVE YOU,
I MISS YOU,**

Through all the emotional gamut that death can
bring these two thoughts remain
most constant.

Through anger, pain, guilt
and that questioning ache,

They will remain etched forever in my heart,
a human memorial

**I LOVE YOU
I MISS YOU,**

and now I send them skyward attached
to my balloon,

That seems to effortlessly lift
to meet the clouds

And I think of you,

**I LOVE YOU
I MISS YOU**

*Karen Nelson
TCF Box Elder County, Utah*



Father's Day Is Still a Time for Celebrating...

A long time had passed since I've enjoyed a holiday - or for that matter any special occasion. With Father's Day coming up shortly, I've decided that this year I'm celebrating. The kids used to love when special occasions came along. I can still remember Stef's eighth birthday, only three months before her death, and how proud she was when we told her she could invite her best friends over for a birthday party. She wore her prettiest blue trimmed party dress with the lace ruffles.

The games they played still stick in my mind. There was "pin the tail on the donkey" and then "Simon Says." I remember clothes flying everywhere in a contest to see which child could put on a complete set of clothes fastest over her party clothes. I remember the hotdogs, punch and cake, the party favors. I remember Stef's giggles.

The memories also wander back to the party our family threw for Stephen's fifth birthday, only three days before the accident which also claimed his life. I still have the picture in my mind of that goofy orange cap someone had given Steve. He loved it, but it was at least two sizes too small. When he tried to put it on, the bill of the cap was up and Stephen flashed us one of those impish grins that reminds you of Spanky and Our Gang. As I'm writing this, the tears are flowing down my cheeks remembering the good times we had together.

A lot of things changed when the kids died. Christmas, Easter, birthdays all became days other people celebrated. But not us. I've done a lot of thinking since then. I know Stef and Steve are in a better place than I could ever imagine and that every day is a holiday for them. In my mind, I think Stef and Stephen would be sad if they felt their Mom and Dad couldn't celebrate life anymore.

Pat and I now have another son, Christopher, plus we have our fourth child on the way. We're trying to rebuild our lives, and I feel we have been blessed along the way. Of course, Christopher is too young to understand Father's Day, but even without him here, I would still consider celebrating Father's Day.

I can still remember the Father's Day a couple of years before Stef and Stephen died. With their mom, they had search all over for something special for me, finally deciding on a T-shirt that said "World's Coolest Dad." I still wear that now-faded shirt occasionally despite the many grass stains and grease marks. When Father's Day arrives, I think I'm going to pull out that old T-shirt and wear it.

I'm going to lay down out in the grass, letting the warm breeze hit me. And I'm going to pretend I'm being caressed by Stef and Steve. I'm going to remember...and I'm going to celebrate!!!

*By Wayne Loder, TCF Lakes Area, MI
Wayne and his wife Pat became bereaved parents in 1991 when 8-year-old Stephanie and 5-year old Stephen died in a traffic accident.*

Mother's Day

Even in my sorrow I feel special for I know the true meaning of the word - Mother. I have reached the ultimate, from the joy of birth to the sorrow of death. I belong to a special group who truly know the meaning of the word - Mother.

Would I have not accepted the gift if I had known the terrible loss I would feel by having you taken away from me? I would still hold out my hands and accept such a precious gift, for to love and to cherish, even for a short while, is worth every tear.

This year on Mother's Day, I'll shed my tears, but let them be as a soft summer's rain. A rain that nourishes the earth, tears that heal and cleanse my heart.

Vera Babb—TCF, St. Louis, MO



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Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

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Regional Coordinator:



You need not walk alone

National Headquarters, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522, 877-969-0100 (toll free)

www.compassionatefriends.org

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.

The Compassionate Friends
c/o Debbie Bouchey
26 Berkshire Drive
East Greenbush, NY 12061

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