



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG  
WWW.COMPASSIONATEFRIENDS.ORG

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER  
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

**PLEASE COME JOIN US!!** The TCF Schenectady Chapter is having its first get together for the bereaved.

When: **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th** from 1:00 to 4:00 (or later)

Where: St. Kateri Parish Center, 2216 Rosa Road, Schenectady

There will be finger foods, cake, crafts and a short walk on a prayer path with CF sentiments. Please bring a photo of your child and a lawn chair. There is no fee to attend and no RSVP is necessary, but we would love to get a head count and of course, donations would graciously be accepted.

If you are willing to assist in any way, please let us know. We are seeking a PA system, crafters, music coordinator, coffee urn, treats and ideas/suggestions. If you plan to attend and/or can help, please email us at [tcf1389@gmail.com](mailto:tcf1389@gmail.com) and we will email you the latest details.

Hope to see you there!!

### *Labor Day*

The unofficial end of summer. The time by which we need to have new school clothes and supplies. The time to begin meeting new teachers and new friends.

The time to...what? To see other parents standing with their eager little ones, waiting for that first school bus ride to the big school. To watch with tear-filled eyes as the bus picks up their children for school, but no longer stops by our house.

Time to watch with anxious anticipation as the kids begin middle school. New experiences, new expectations, new fears.

Time to learn that saying "I love you" will always be said in silence.

Time to watch our teenagers experience high school and its freedoms and decisions.

Time to wonder what temptations await our children, to wonder about that car they bought, to realize all these things are happening to some other parents.

Time to buy single bed linens for the college dorm. Time to buy a new computer to take to school and keep the old one for us.

Time to listen to other parents talk about these events.

No, for us, Labor Day is just that - a day to labor through the memories left behind by the loss of our child, a day that truly signifies the end of the summer of our life.

- Sandra Wright



# 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.

*Pain is watching the little boy your child played with last year board the school bus on his very first day of school*

- Barbara Augustine  
TCF, Lancaster, PA

In loving memory of THOMAS J. PERSICO on his 51st birthday --  
September 15, 2017. We miss you and love you forever. You are always in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Love, Your Family

## IN DREAMS

Come, my son, in dreams to me,  
tell of things I've yet to see,  
of the beauty, love and joy.

Come, my son, in dreams to me,  
tell me of eternity,  
of cherubs, angels on the wing,  
harps, and heavenly choirs that sing.

Come, my son, in dreams of peace,  
that my troubled thoughts may cease,  
Come dry my tears, come ease my pain,  
until the day we meet again.

"Be still my soul," you say. I cannot find my soul. My soul is roaming amidst mountains of ashes searching for my heart. Amidst the ashes of my brothers and sisters and our beloved country's fathers and mothers and children. There, mingling with the sacred dust, are the remains of my heart. A heart pierced by four burning planes. My soul is roaring in anguish and despair. It cannot exist without my heart. And it cannot be still.

(Written on September 11, 2001)

## September 11th

*I lost my beloved son on September 11th.* He was on the 104th floor of Tower #1. I watched on that fateful day the smoke billowing up into the clouds and couldn't believe my eyes. I kept telling myself that he got out once before and he would do it again. My husband and I stood transfixed in front of the television, not believing what we were witnessing. I spoke to my son the night before, and he was so happy and full of life. He had just moved into his home that past March and had so many plans for it. The sky was so blue and the clouds so white that the unfolding events seemed surreal.

We grieve every day...for the wife and son and daughter that will never again know his love and kindness. We, his parents, remember him as a little boy and young man, and then as a husband and father. How could this happen to this wonderful son of ours? When will the hurt be less sharp or the sadness go away for even one whole day? Will there ever be a day when I will not cry for him? I don't think so.

- Judith Jones  
Livingston, NJ

[www.pbs.org/memorialdayconcert](http://www.pbs.org/memorialdayconcert)

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

**S**OMETIMES I wish my sister Amy had died of cancer, or a car accident, or something I could neatly explain. Instead, she died by suicide when she was 18 years old. I realize that most people are uncomfortable discussing death unless it's about a great, great aunt who died in her sleep at the age of 107. But at least if your sibling dies of a disease or an accident, people will say something relatively appropriate and not feel too uneasy before moving on to a new topic. Not so with suicide. When my sister first died, I was so in shock, I had no idea how to answer the incredibly insensitive remarks like, "Why did she do it?" "What kind of problems was your family having?" "How did she do it?" Even people who did not ask these questions looked at me with a mixture of pity and curiosity. To compound the taboo of my sister's suicide was the fact that sex was mixed up in it. She was an extremely outgoing, creative, charismatic person with no history of mental illness. Everywhere she spent time—church groups, school, the neighborhood pool—she was the center of attention because it was so much fun to be around her. Two teachers of Amy's spoke at her funeral, which was standing room only, and shared what a lasting influence Amy had on people. So at first the suicide was such a surprise that foul play was considered a possibility before the note was found. In that note, we discovered that she had recently been diagnosed with herpes. You would think that's not such a big deal in the age of AIDS. But the college she attended was quite conservative, and the health services department had some awful brochures supplied by the religious right. They basically said your life is over and you'll never be able to have a child. The nurse there said her diabetes had exacerbated her condition. To top it off, my parents, like most parents, never really discussed sex. That doesn't mean we kids didn't know about it, but it did mean that the last people in the world we would ever discuss sex with would be our parents. Suicide mixed with a sexual disease. It doesn't make for very good cocktail party chitchat. So, taking my cue from my parents and society in general, I stopped mentioning Amy. When people asked me how many siblings I had, I would say "two—my surviving younger sister and brother." It just seemed easier, and people didn't have to feel so squeamish talking to me. But two events changed that. One was a conversation I had with my mother about Amy. I thought, at least with a family member, I could discuss her. We were talking about travel—Amy's passion was traveling to Greece—and I was reminiscing about how enthusiastic Amy was about traveling and how much fun it would have been to see Greece with her. My mother said she just couldn't talk

about it. It made her too sad. This was years after Amy's death. What the heck did she mean we couldn't talk about it? If I couldn't discuss Amy with my mother, then who could I? I turned to her and said, "If I die before you, I hope you won't refuse to talk about me." I told her that I knew Amy would want us to remember her and there are so many incredibly great memories. I called my brother and sister afterwards and told them the same thing; ***"If I die, please don't pretend I didn't exist. I'm telling you here and now that I want to be remembered."*** The other event happened very recently, I'm on a nonprofit board for an organization that helps women working in the Internet industry with career advice. We had a speaker who talked about women over 40 working in the cyber biz. She talked about working as a chat host and said that one of the chats she hosted was about suicide. She mentioned her son who had died of suicide. I thought, "Here's a woman my mother's age who is telling a room full of strangers about her son's death." It was immensely comforting to see how she handled the topic. You could tell she had a wonderful relationship with him. The board asked her to join our organization. I pulled her aside and asked about the suicide chat. I told her that my sister had died that way. She told me how sorry she was and asked her name. It's the first time in my life I was completely at ease discussing Amy's death. I knew the look she gave me was of empathy, not of pity, not of curiosity. She wasn't being judgmental, thinking, "What kind of dysfunctional family do you come from?" Unless you have an immediate family member who died of suicide, no one can ever know the incredible pain and emotional baggage that come with it. I told her later that I get frustrated when people tell me they know what I'm going through because their grandmother died of heart disease recently. I am sorry, but it is not the same. A grandmother has lived a full life. She is not leaving behind middle-aged parents and young siblings who ask, "What could I have done to prevent this?" I suppose there will always be extra emotional baggage tied to a suicide of a family member. But not discussing it isn't going to make that baggage any lighter. In fact by not talking about it, I was contributing to the taboo associated with it. Of course this doesn't mean I'll introduce it into every casual conversation. From now on however, when people ask me how many siblings I have, I'll let them know the whole truth—I have a younger sister and brother, and I had another wonderful sister named Amy, who died of suicide.

- Susan Kimj TCF/Marin County & San Francisco Chapter

# Earthquake



An earthquake strikes! Foundations are rocked, buildings topple and a city is leveled. What used to be, no longer exists. Perhaps all that remains in the hearts of the survivors is a small measure of faith, but even that can be shattered. The scene is surveyed with shock, numbness and disbelief. For the question WHY? There is no answer! The people are dislocated in strange dwellings. Their alien emotions & feelings cause confusion. They become strangers to themselves and cannot cope. The task of rebuilding looks monumental. They pick among the rubble like robots, but exhaustion soon overcomes them. Their days are joyless!

Slowly the city is rebuilt— foundations are made sounder, buildings are sturdier - and it takes on a new beauty. This all happens because the architect, in drawing up new blueprints, applies his unique knowledge and draws on all available resources. He takes a hard look at priorities and values, puts them in proper order and corrects the weaknesses of the past. Bit by bit, the vision of a new creation becomes a reality.

Like the Earthquake City, our family was turned completely upside down by the death of our son, John. Our foundations were rocked. The buildings of our inner beings were shaken and leveled. There was shock, disbelief, pain and sorrow. There was physical exhaustion, and the days had no joy. We were robots in a strange world, experiencing emotions that were foreign to us. Nothing was normal. We wondered if it ever would be.

Incessantly, we were petitioned the greatest architect of all, and the Lord's design unfolded gradually. Our weaknesses were shored up while strengths were rebuilt. Our lives found new direction. Values and priorities crystallized. The blueprint became clear. The new creation of our family embraces the warmth and laughter of the son who has gone before us, leaving a vision of life to me.

- Binky Jacoby, TCF, Boise, ID

# The Fall of Fall

What is it about the season that takes me  
back in time?

Everything I do, I find you are on my mind.  
Haunting dreams find me at night when I try to sleep.  
Every little detail is replayed, and the sadness is far  
too deep.

Something about the close of summer seems  
to bring it back,  
Making it so hard to move onward and stay on track.  
Something about the dying and fading of the trees  
Brings my heart to sorrow, with the falling of the  
leaves.

How I long to stop it, to keep the fall away,  
But time marches on, and summer just won't stay.  
I know with the fall, winter is not far behind.  
Another lonely season, and the memories flood my  
mind.

I cry my tears of sorrow, and pray for spring to come,  
A rebirth of the earth, and the warmth of the sun.  
It makes the memories softer and gentler to recall,  
But now my life is saddened with the nearing of fall.

- Sheila Simmons

*In memory of her son Steven (3/24/70-10/19)*

## Remembering

Go ahead and mention my child,  
The one that died, you know.  
Don't worry about hurting me further.  
The depth of my pain doesn't show.  
Don't worry about making me cry.  
I'm already crying inside.  
Help me to heal by releasing  
The tears that I try to hide.  
I'm hurt when you just keep silent,  
Pretending he didn't exist.  
I'd rather you mention my child,  
Knowing that he has been missed.  
You asked me how I was doing.  
I say "pretty good" or "fine"  
but healing is something on-going.  
I know it will take a lifetime.

- Elizabeth Dent

# Still Wearing Our Masks



October makes me think of Halloween, and Halloween makes me think of masks, and masks remind me that sometimes, when we're grieving, we wear masks

without even realizing it. We may never stop to think about how other people perceive our appearances, our images and our behaviors. Over time, we may gradually drift into a pattern of "being" that is so familiar to us we never realize that others might be seeing us in a totally different way.

Our pain may have caused us to have an outwardly distorted appearance, even when inwardly we may actually feel we are reconciling to our losses. Some people appear to be continually angry and bitter when, in fact, it is only a reflection of their sadness. Even though their inward hostilities have begun to soften and resolve, on the outside they have kept their protective masks of fierceness. In reality, they are starved for love and companionship, but they are afraid to let their true feelings show. What if they were ridiculed, violated or abandoned and therefore hurt anew?

On the other hand, there are those who have adopted a perpetually "sunny" countenance that covers an internal sorrow. Their hearts and minds and faith may be splintered, but they are determined that the people around them will never guess their secret. They may believe that showing sorrow is a weakness that will drive away the people they think they need.

It would appear that masks are psychological props that seem to protect us from something we fear. For some people, self disclosure is as repulsive as public nudity! It seems safer for mask-wearers to endure the lack of support and attention they so sorely need rather than to honestly reveal their innermost feelings.

I wonder what would happen if we all let down our

guards and allowed our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers to discover our real pain. Would our revelations really make us any more weak or vulnerable? Would we really be at any more emotional risk? Could we be hurt any more than we've already been?

Naturally, if we take the chance of disclosing our true selves, revealing where we are weak or frightened or hurt, there is always the possibility that we might become prey for the predators. The vultures seem always to be circling. But there is also the chance that we will provide an opportunity for the intelligent, strong and compassionate of our peers to offer their support. Where there is evil, there is also good. Where there is pain, there is also healing. Nature teaches us that in life there is balance.

Precisely because we have suffered the ultimate wound -- the death of one who was truly loved -- perhaps eventually we can afford to take more risks. It's a tough issue. Dare we risk the pain of being hurt again if we disclose? Or have we become strong enough and brave enough to take a chance on the rediscovery of love and the richness of new attachments? It is true that what does not kill us make us stronger?

Perhaps it becomes a question of giving ourselves enough time to form scar tissue. We may need to proceed cautiously, taking baby-step risks at first, trusting our most private thoughts, feelings and needs to only one or two close and dependable friends. We may need to test the formation of delicate new bondings -- even in old relationships!

Gradually, we may be able to uncover enough of our hidden courage to feel safe in abandoning our protective masks and revealing our true feelings -- not only to the world at large, but more importantly, to ourselves.

- Andrea Gambill

## September, Grandparents' Month

Grandparent's month, a time to celebrate the unconditional love of grandparents for their grandchildren - a time of joy and happiness.

For the grandparent who has lost a grandchild, it's a time of sadness - a reminder of what was & what will never be.

I wish for you a month of peace, sweet memories and the unconditional love you showered on your grandchild.

- Lois Copeland

## For Both of Us

As long as I can, I will look at this world for both of us.

As long as I can, I will laugh with the birds, I will sing with the flowers, I will pray to the stars, for the both of us.

As long as I can, I will remember how many things on this earth were your joy.

And I will live as well as you would want me to live

As long as I can.

- Sasha Wagner





## Leadership

Albany Co-Leader: Jan Messina 439-0346

Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

Saratoga Springs Leader: Gabby Gravelle 596-4275

Newsletter Editor: Debbie Bouchey  
477-7371 or alyssabob@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Jim Tierney

Mailers: Joanne Baia, Maggie Sievert, Leslie Snyder

Special Mailing: Marylou & Ed Clark

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

National Headquarters, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522, 877-969-0100 (toll free)  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

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

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