



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2021

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 meetings, but may be holding virtual meetings. Please call your local chapter to inquire about meetings.

SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER
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SCHENECTADY CHAPTER
JoAnn Bomeisl 518-372-8215
tcf1389@gmail.com
John Powers 518-399-2492
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Peggy Hohenstein 518-887-5204

**COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
GREENE COUNTY CHAPTER**
georgeknoll64@yahoo.com
Carol 518-537-6098

THANKS

Thanks to the friend who did know the right words to say:

“There is a group in town that might help you.”

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about “that group.”

Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it would really hurt to talk — and talked.

Thanks to the dad who said after the first meeting that he could never come back — and did.

Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a “new one” and said: “They really can help.”

Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was again able to bake cookies — for her “Compassionate Friends.”

Thanks to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people — who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men — and didn’t say he was sorry.

Because of you, we will be able to help someone we don’t even know — next month.

John DeBoer
TCF Greater Omaha, NE

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.

LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER: February 20, 2021



LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

In loving memory of my son, **TOMMY GALARNEAU**, on his 50th birthday (1/11/1971). Never to be forgotten.

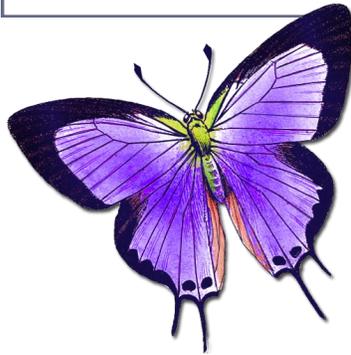
With my everlasting love, MOM

In loving memory of **THOMAS J. PERSICO** on the 24th anniversary of his death on January 6th. You are always in our thoughts and forever in our hearts.

Love, your family

In loving memory of my daughter, **ALYSSA BOUCHEY**, on her 16th anniversary in heaven. You are my light and my world. I miss you so much.

Love, Mom



Bittersweet Memories

One of the most precious things to a parent who has lost a child is the memories. Without them, it would be as if their child never was. With them it is so bittersweet that it can make a parent laugh and cry, rejoice and anguish, touch the sweetness to the lips and taste the salt from the tears.

Memories keep the heart from crushing under the weight of sorrow. They give a parent the chance to be with their child again. They can walk through their memories like they were a movie. When the memories are so vivid, you can almost feel them, touch them, hug them, and kiss them. It is so bittersweet when the reality comes and you realize it is just a memory, a thought and you are reminded of what you have lost.

If you ask a parent if they would give up the memories so they did not have to feel the pain of knowing their child is gone, they would tell you no. As painful as it may be, not having the memories of feeling their presence is just as unbearable as losing them.

There is no happy place to go, but there is a place to be with your child. You know before you step into that realm that it will be painful, but you know that it will be joyful too.

So as we let the memories take us to a time that our child was safe with us, just rest a while until it is time to go and the next time, try not to think of what is gone but what is still in your heart and will always be.

Vickie Van Antwerp
TCF of Brevard, NC

Dear son in Heaven

I sit here and ponder how very much I'd like to talk with you today.
 I know how much you care for me and how much I care for you.
 And each time that I think of you I know you miss me too.
 An angel came and took you by the hand and said your place was ready in Heaven above.
 And you had to leave behind all those you dearly love.
 You had so much to live for, you had so much to do.
 It still seems impossible that God was taking you. And though your life on earth is passed, in Heaven it starts anew.
 You'll live for all eternity, just as God has promised you.
 And though you've walked through Heaven's gate, we are never apart.
 Every time I think of you, you're right here, deep in my heart.

With all our love, Mom & Dad
Connie and Tony Paoletti
 Lovingly lifted from Bereaved Parents of the USA
 Buffalo Chapter Newsletter Jan/Feb/March 2019

What is New about the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives, a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending. The short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try. But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the

struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at the Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you's" not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the family we have right now.

Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

Dory Rooker
TCF Upper Valley, VT

We mourn the family we used to be and we struggle to be the new family that we've become...there will always be a missing space where you were. We will fill that space with all the many wonderful, funny, loving memories and we will continue to create new memories to honor you.

BPUSA

The Visit Home

There once was an old man who journeyed back to his hometown with the intent of reminiscing about the good times, as well as the sorrows he had experienced as a young father.

High on the list of places he intended to visit was the elementary school his daughter had attended.

First he would walk around the huge playground where he so often had brought his daughter to play. He would stop at the slide, then the swings, and finally the monkey bars, remembering the joy on his daughter's face as she had moved happy and carefree from one adventure to another.

Then he would enter the school building. His first stop would be the kindergarten room. He could still see in his mind that memorable day almost 75 years before, his daughter's outstretched hand enclosed in his firm, yet tender, grip. As they searched for her classroom, their loving touch finally ended as she walked through the open door to a new stage in her life.

The old man's next stop would be the tiny gymnasium where his daughter had performed in the holiday pageant. How beautiful she had appeared, dressed in soft white as she sang *Silent Night, Holy Night*.

Finally he would stop at his daughter's third grade classroom. The old man clearly remembered the day he and his wife had stood outside the closed classroom door, tears streaming down their cheeks. Finally, gathering their courage they entered the room to comfort and talk with their daughter's classmates who, as yet, failed to comprehend why they would never again see alive the little girl they all considered their best friend.

The anticipation grew strong as he neared the street where the school stood. Arriving at the spot, the old

man wept at what he saw. The plain white concrete structure he expected was no longer there -- a sleek modern building in its place. An asphalt parking lot now covered the old grassy playground.

Now understanding that he would never be able to fulfill his mission, the old man started thinking about the transient nature of life -- how nothing ever remains the same.

Communities change. Buildings are here today and gone tomorrow. Loved ones live -- and die. Even nations rise and fall.

But then the old man had another thought: the love his daughter had passed onto him still remained within his heart -- 67 years after she had died.

He realized that it truly didn't matter if a day, a year, a decade, or a century were to pass. The candle of love would continue to burn bright in his heart.

And he thought how even an eternity from now the love he still carried for his daughter would have transcended his own death and been returned to her a thousand fold.



The old man turned his car around to head back toward the highway. There was no need to stop elsewhere. Taking one last glance in the rear view mirror at the new school,

he understood that memories live on not because of a building, or a classroom or a playground. They remain alive inside each of us because love outlasts even the sands of time.

A smile crossed his lips.
His mission had been completed!

Wayne Loder
The Compassionate Friends USA

HEART CONNECTIONS – WHAT WE BRING WITH US INTO THIS NEW YEAR

When we shifted into the new year, expressions of relief were plentiful that 2020 was finally over. Yet the pandemic has not ended. Uncertainty and unrest remain on multiple levels. What can we bring with us into 2021 as we continue to face loss, grief, restrictions, and fear? Through all of the suffering that has taken place, we can value the positives that rose through and utilize the lessons we learned.

Kindness on individual and collective levels popped up everywhere. People who had not suffered in this moment gave time, money, love, and help to others who did. People who had less than they had before, found gratitude for what remained, and offered new acts of kindness to others.

Priorities were frequently redefined. Slowed down by force or by choice, people examined the areas that previously received their time and attention. Reflection prompted many people to keep the most meaningful activities and let go of what no longer seemed so important.

Relationships were examined and strengthened. Once we no longer had an easy ability to see who we wanted, when we wanted, and how we wanted to see them, we assessed and prioritized the relationships most important to us. People went to great lengths to communicate in creative ways when personal interaction wasn't easy or sometimes possible.

Clarity emerged regarding our goals, hopes, and the reality of what we control. People examined jobs, partners, finances, locations, family relationships, risk levels, and more. Changes resulted that better align our hopes and dreams for the future with the

recognition that nothing is guaranteed and there is no time to waste.

Cleaning out and letting go happened within our physical spaces as well as on emotional and psychological levels. Unfinished business holding us back had more time to be addressed. While this process is painful and energetically challenging, it allows for the letting go of what may have been dragging behind us for too long. Freed space creates new opportunities.

There are more lessons and understandings we can keep beyond these. For the newly bereaved, it can be hard to find anything to hold onto or hope for. For those who have endured grief over many years, we may have already experienced this process and can be reminded to do so again. Regardless of our individual experiences of loss this past year, each of us can strive to take something of value that we learned into the new year. When we identify growth and new possibilities through this forced journey of change, we do it in honor of the life of our precious child, grandchild, or sibling.

By: Shari O'Loughlin
Blog Posted 1/15/2021
www.compassionatefriends.org

LOST POTENTIAL

Last year I attended a workshop presented by a specialist in grief named Dr. Cable. Dr. Cable said many important things about the grief process, but as a bereaved parent one thing stuck in my mind.

He said that if you ask a bereaved person to describe his deceased mother, he will say, "Oh, she was so sweet. She always wore flowered dresses and loved to bake cookies." But, if you ask a bereaved parent to describe her deceased child, she will say, "Oh, he would be five this year and just starting kindergarten," or, "She would

be twenty-two this year and graduating from college."

You see, we bereaved parents grieve the lost potential of our children. Our children don't stop growing in our minds. We grieve again and anew each year as our child would have been a different age.

*Chris Anderson
TCF, Walla, Walla, Washington*



Leadership

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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.



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