



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2019

### TCF MONTHLY MEETINGS

#### ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm

Westminster Presbyterian Church

85 Chestnut St., Albany

Jan Messina 518-439-0346

[JanMessina@verizon.net](mailto:JanMessina@verizon.net)

Kathleen Kelleher 518-439-1114

[Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com](mailto:Kathleen.Kelleher17@gmail.com)

#### SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

1st Tuesday of every month (except July &

August) at 7:30 pm

Wesley Health Care Center

131 Lawrence St., Saratoga Springs

Gabby Gravelle 518-596-4275

#### SCHENECTADY CHAPTER

1st Wednesday of every month at 7 pm

St. Kateri Parish Center (basement)

1803 Union St., Schenectady

JoAnn Bomeisl 518-372-8215

[tcf1389@gmail.com](mailto:tcf1389@gmail.com)

John Powers 518-399-2492

[jpower11@nycap.rr.com](mailto:jpower11@nycap.rr.com)

Peggy Hohenstein 518-887-5204

#### COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

##### GREENE COUNTY CHAPTER

2nd Wednesday of every month at 7 pm

United Methodist Church

40 Woodland Ave., Catskill

[georgeknoll64@yahoo.com](mailto:georgeknoll64@yahoo.com)

Carol 518-537-6098

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING NEWSLETTER DELIVERY!**

**This is the last newsletter that will be mailed to you  
unless you take action as described below:**

Many local TCF members find much-needed peace and comfort in our bi-monthly newsletter. We want to continue producing the newsletter, but would like to leverage today's digital channels to reduce the current expense of printing and mailing the newsletter, approximately \$1,000 annually. We are now offering three different delivery methods:

At any time, a member can download and print the newsletter by going to the Albany Chapter website: <http://tcfalbany.org/newsletter.aspx>. Old newsletters can also be printed from this site. **If you select this delivery method, no action is needed on your part.**

**OR**

We can send you a pdf attachment of the latest newsletter as a blind-copy email - your email address will not be visible to other members. **If you select this delivery method, please send your email address to [Kathleen.kelleher17@gmail.com](mailto:Kathleen.kelleher17@gmail.com).**

**OR**

If you do not have electronic access, we will continue to print and mail the newsletter to you. **If you select this delivery method, please call Kathleen Kelleher at 518-439-1114. You may leave a message with your name and address. You may also submit your request to your chapter leader.**

**We will continue to accept Love Gifts to honor your children and cover costs associated with our chapter and newsletter. Thank you for helping us "save" our newsletter!**



# 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.

*Tears do not flow  
only from the  
pitiful & weak.  
They spring also  
from the love and  
tenderness of the  
strong.*

*We should never  
be ashamed of our  
tears, whether in  
private sorrow or  
public grieving.  
Tears alleviate our  
grief and  
encourage the  
healing of our  
wounds.*

TCF Nacogdoches, TX

In loving memory of our son, **DANIEL JOHN DOPP.**  
(4/1983 - 9/2005)

In loving memory of **THOMAS J. PERSICO**, on his birthday, September 15, 2019. We miss you and love you forever. You are always in our thoughts and in our hearts. Love, your family.

## FRENCH TOAST

I stand here before the stove.  
all the ingredients are here,  
the eggs, the milk,  
vanilla, cinnamon and sugar.  
The frying pan is heating slowly,  
melting with the butter.  
and still I stand  
in my robe and slippers.  
I pick up the egg to break it in the  
bowl, but I just can't do it.  
I want so much to fix French Toast,  
because my husband loves it so,  
just like my son did all his life...  
right up until he died.  
I've lived this scene  
so many times since then,  
always with a tear and a sigh.  
We had French Toast  
at least once a week

for more years than I can remember,  
How they ate! I'd laugh and complain  
because  
I had to cook so much.  
Once, in Florida,  
when we had French Toast  
for breakfast in a restaurant with  
friends, he said, "This is okay,  
but you ought to taste my mom's!  
I can still hear him saying it.  
Now, I just can't do it.  
I cannot cook French Toast!  
My husband never asks,  
and while I stand  
before the stove and weep,  
he pretends not to notice,  
but I know he understands.  
I just can't cook French Toast.  
Not yet!!

By Fay Harden  
TCF Tyler, Texas  
August 2009 Newsletter

## ANGELS AMONG US

I have read that grieving parents shouldn't be allowed to operate an automobile — I must agree! After the death of my 26-year-old son, Allen, I seemed to have some of my best cries while driving. It's a wonder I haven't destroyed my steering column as a result of hitting my steering wheel in frustration. I also had a tendency to gaze up at the sky (another danger in itself). I don't know why, perhaps, in my naïve state, hoping I might see my son.

One drive, however, stands out quite vividly. It was a very cloudy, drizzly day, extremely bleak to say the least. The sky was a solid mass of gray clouds. Obviously depressing in itself, when suddenly the flood gates opened and the tears began to flow. Exasperation engulfed me, I felt as though a ton of bricks rested on my chest. I was numb, empty, lonely and felt deserted. I began to pray, asking God to understand my pain and take it away. I felt like I just couldn't take it anymore.

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**LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR  
THE NEXT NEWSLETTER:  
October 20, 2019**

## MY FIRST FIVE YEARS AS AN ONLY CHILD

I've been without my brother for five years. I guess the hard part is over now. Sometimes I think I have aged 30 years in the past five. In a strange way, these past five years have been the best and worst years of my life. I have accomplished the many things of a typical young adult learning to drive, graduating from high school, going to college, and starting a career.

Every one of my accomplishments has been clouded by the fact that my brother George is not here to share each milestone, and is not achieving any more milestones for himself. He was cheated of so many things. He will never graduate, get married, have children or travel. He will never grow old, and I will never have a brother to grow old with. I'll never have nieces and nephews. The sibling relationship usually the longest relationship of one's life, has been cut short for us. In these five years, although I have learned to accept that he is not coming back, the difficult part is dealing with it day by day.

My relationship with George ended just when we started to become friends. The childish fights and other annoyances of having a big brother were changing to real conversations and to having an occasional ally. I am angry about all the things that we have missed and all the things that will never be, and I guess I always will be. Five years heals a lot of wounds, but the hurt will always be there, no matter how many years pass. In these past five years, I have been forced into a new outlook on life. I have felt lonely and alone. I now realize that I will never be the same person as before. Maybe I am a better person because of what I've been through. Five years ago I never thought I would survive, but I am still here dealing with it every day. I don't know what the next five years will bring, but at least I have made it this far.

*Kristen Steiner, TCF Staten Island, NY*

*In memory of my brother, George.*

## THE GRIEF OF A PARENT WHO HAS LOST AN INFANT

To experience the loss of an infant is to grieve for what never was. After all the months of anticipation and preparation, the actual birth of a child brings the feeling of hope and fulfillment. Should the child be stillborn, or die hours, days or even months later, the unrealized dreams become a source of pain for parents. No parent ever expects to outlive her child; the death of an infant is often the loss of a child unknown even to his parents. The expected stages of grief (guilt, disbelief, anger, etc.) can have new directions for the parents who have lost an infant.

1. Shame and Guilt - Especially if the infant was stillborn or had a birth defect, the mother may feel she has failed as a woman. "Other women have live, normal babies, why can't I?" Should an infant die months after birth, parents find it hard to resolve feelings that it was their fault.
2. No Memories - Parents may only have "souvenirs of the occasion" (birth certificates, I.D. bracelet) by which to remember their child. If the infant is older, they may have pictures and a few belongings, but they still feel they hadn't really gotten to know their child.
3. Loneliness in Grief - it is hard for friends and relatives to share your grief for a child they never knew. If the child is newborn, they may give the impression you are grieving unnecessarily, they hope you can "forget this baby" and "have another one."
4. Neglected Fathers - Too often the sympathies of professionals and friends are directed mainly to the mother. It is important to remember that the father had made plans for this baby, too.
5. Mothers vs. Fathers - since the mother has bonded with her child during the pregnancy, her grief may be much deeper than the father's, who only came to know this child after birth. It may be difficult for a father to understand why his wife's grief is so profound and so prolonged.

*Claire McGaughey and Sue Shelley  
TCF, St. Louis, MO*

# TCF Stepping Stone for New Life

By: *Gay N. Kennedy, San Pedro, CA*  
*In Memory of son, Daniel*

**WHEN** I attended my first TCF meeting in Seattle 12 years ago, I had totally lost the desire to live. As I sat in the meeting room at Seattle University, I thought, “What am I doing here?” overwhelmed with grief over the recent death of my seven-year-old son, and only child, Daniel, I couldn’t bear the pain any longer. I listened to each grieving parent sharing their story of loss. I kept thinking “Oh dear God, it’s been many years for some of these families since their child died and they’re still coming to these meetings! Is this what I have to look forward to — a lifetime of this excruciating pain and monthly meetings?”

Daniel and my five-year-old stepson, Isaac, were struck by a car, which sent them both to the ER comatose and on life support for six days. Isaac sustained brain stem damage and paralysis. He was hospitalized for a couple of months, followed by years of physical therapy, complications, and visits to doctors and neurologists.

A wrongful death lawsuit was filed against the 17-year-old who had hit my sons when driving 55 miles per hour in a 35 mph zone. A continual flow of appointments lasted eight months, meeting with attorneys and going through the courts and the trial. Through my frustration, I began lobbying for a bill to change the laws concerning reckless driving vs. vehicular homicide. It passed in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, but the Governor vetoed the bill due to a lack of jail space.

I was eventually forced to take a leave of absence from my job — which was somewhat of a relief, since I had become a non-functioning employee. Simple tasks at work had become overwhelming. The doctor had prescribed tranquilizers for me as my increasing anxiety attacks, depression and stress mounted.

Alcohol seemed to calm my nerves and helped me to sleep. I thought if I drank enough, it would deaden the pain. Alcohol, being a depressant, only caused my depression to escalate. It also gave me the false courage to attempt suicide one night, in the early stages of my grief.

Martial problems from the accident compounded and seven months after my son’s death, my husband and I divorced. A month later I spend my “first” Christmas alone in my dimly lit living room, begging God to please take me home.

That was in 1985, and now I understand why

people returned to TCF — it’s healing. As time passes, to be able to hear our child’s name, to share with others who understand, acknowledge birthdays, special anniversary dates and their lives as it becomes a faded memory no longer talked about among family and friends. We don’t want to “worry” others that we don’t “seem” to be “getting over our loss.” Bless them for they are unable to understand that we never fully “get over it.”

A special comforting bond grow among the bereaved parents in which our children brought us together. Thank God for the “seasoned” TCF members, and close friends who have given me strength and courage to go on, who have listened tirelessly for hours, who let me “fall apart”, cry, “lose it,” and vent my anger and rage. Through their own pain, they let me know that I need not walk alone. What a beautiful, loving gift these TCF parents and dear friends have given to others who are hurting.

I listen closely to these seasoned veterans. They’ve gone through their child’s death and all that follows, yet they still came out on the other side. They’ve been down the path before me, and know what’s ahead. They give us hope and understanding.

I never imagined that 10 years after my son’s death, I would take that tragedy and volunteer to work with other grieving parents and siblings. A friend with the Los Angeles Police Department Crisis Response Team suggested that I take my own experience and apply at the Department to take the training for the team. That was two years ago.

Our team members assist the police with death notifications to families. We are on 24 hour call and respond to natural deaths, homicides, suicides, rapes, and armed robberies to provide short-term intervention to the victims and their families.

The Compassionate Friends National Board President Rich Edler (LA/South Bay TCF Chapter) has begun working with us as a speaker during our L.A.P.D. training classes. He has compiled TCF packets that each team member can give to grieving families to aid in long-term support.

We have also begun training new police recruits within the L.A.P.D. Harbor Division on the Crisis Response Team, helping them to become sensitive to the initial shock and grief of the victim’s families and the need for our team members to assist the officers and grieving families.

The direction of my life changed dramatically May 8, 1985 and I’m grateful that The Compassionate Friends has been the stepping stone to where my life has now taken me.



## WOULD HAVE BEEN... SHOULD HAVE BEEN...

*By Donna Daviv, Roswell, NM*

He would have been ten years old  
on his last birthday,  
Blonde and fair with a sprinkling of freckles  
across his nose,  
He would have had friends over to play,  
collected bugs,  
Played ball and watched the Power Rangers  
After school.

For Halloween, he would have been  
something scary,  
Hiding rubber spiders around the house  
to frighten us.  
He should have been healthy, strong, and tall,  
laughing in the sun, running through the grass,  
And going swimming on a hot day.

He should have been with us on all of  
our trips and visits  
To see grandparents and cousins,  
aunts and uncles,  
He should have had wonderful birthday parties,  
and merry Christmases with lots of presents  
And blissful parents,  
he should have been in the family photos.

He could have been cured.  
Was that so much to ask?  
He could have been one of the "lucky ones,"  
rather than the downside of the statistics.

He could have lived to see the flowers,  
and trees grow and bloom,  
The ones we planted together that last fall,  
instead, he has fake flowers covering his grave,  
Fading in the hot, New Mexico sun,  
as he faded away from us.

He could have been a great man,  
he might have been a doctor, or a scientist or  
maybe an actor...  
Instead of the main character in a poem for  
bereaved parents.

He made us laugh so much with his  
crazy costumes and rubber snakes.  
He might have or could have or would have...  
but I'll never know,  
All those dreams died the night he died.

He might have loved to read,  
he might have, but he isn't here,  
Having spent only half of those ten years on earth.

He is the ghost who keeps me company,  
as I wander,  
Through my remaining years on earth,  
a shadow of my former self,  
Making clay angels that are fair and blonde,  
with a hint of freckles on their noses.

He isn't here with me,  
the deep void his passing left,  
Is only partially filled by day-to-day activities,  
there is an empty hole that opens up at night  
As I try to fall asleep,  
without watching reruns of the horror movie  
called Cancer.  
Can't I put life on rewind and do a second take?  
Erase all of this sadness and sorrow?

What he was, was a teacher,  
he taught me about life and death,  
and courage,  
Not a day goes by that I don't think about him,  
and remember well the lessons he taught me.

Lovingly lifted from  
Bereavement Magazine  
Colorado Springs, CO

*Continued from page 2*

As I reached for a tissue, which was always at hand, I made an attempt to pull myself together. As I wiped the tears, I glanced into the sky. In astonishment, I wiped my eyes again, knowing I must be hallucinating. Directly in front of my car the dark clouds had parted and there was a large oval shaped patch of clear white sky. In the center of the oval stood the perfect form of an angel. The wings were outstretched as if in a welcoming gesture.

I immediately hit my brakes and stopped the car. Ultimately realizing I was sitting in the middle of the road, I eased to the shoulder. I was mesmerized and afraid to

take my eyes off the gorgeous vision, for fear it may disappear. Frantically, I searched my car for a camera, but to no avail. Apparently this was for my eyes only and I would remember it always.

I felt so blessed, knowing God had heard my cry for help and the vision He sent to ease my pain. All we have to do is ask, in faith.

*Sue Engels  
TCF Thomson, August, CA*



**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  
518-435-5321 or alyssabob@yahoo.com  
Mailers: Joanne Baia  
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.



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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