



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG

MARCH, APRIL, MAY 2023

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER

3rd Tuesday every month at 7:30 pm

Westminster Presbyterian Church

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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.

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UNFORTUNATELY THE SARATOGA
CHAPTER HAS CLOSED ITS DOORS



TCF is very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends 46th Annual National Conference in Denver! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

Unique and cherished highlights of our conference

include our heartfelt Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. Our weekend of inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

This year's conference will be held at the Sheraton Denver Downtown. Reservations can now be made online at

www.compassionatefriends.org/event/46th-tcf-national-conference/ The discounted room rate with the Sheraton is \$159 per night plus tax. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. TCF looks forward to seeing you in Denver!



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.

Newsletter Editor
Needed

I have been the editor of the Albany/Saratoga TCF Newsletter for the past 12 years. I am looking for someone who is willing to take over as editor of our newsletter. I have plenty of articles saved up over the years that can assist you in drafting the newsletter. There are also many sources online that you can get great ideas from. If you are interested, please contact me at DebbieBouchey24@outlook.com

LOVE GIFT DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER IS JUNE 20, 2023



LOVE GIFT

Living on in our hearts.

Please consider sending a Love Gift to honor your child and to help support our chapter and newsletter.

In loving memory of our dear daughter, **KAREN MICHELLE DE MARCO**, who passed away 44 years ago. Loving and missing you always,
Love, Mom & Dad (Kathy and Larry De Marco)

In loving memory of **LISA GERHAN** on the anniversary of her death, March 1997.

Love, Dad & Mom (David Gerhan and Anita Paul)
I would like to share a nice message from David Gerhan about how much this newsletter means to him.

“My wife, Anita Paul and I continue to appreciate all of the work that you do, and especially the newsletter with its inspiring and comforting readings and the listing of the names of our children whose deaths have hurt so much. We say over and over again how important it is to grieving people to hear and see the names of their loves ones who have died, knowing they are not forgotten means so much.”

In loving memory of **TIMOTHY KNORR MCFARLAND** on the anniversary of his death, March 2013. Love, Mom (Gloria Knorr)

Thank you Tim for your service to our country!!

BURIED HEART

My heart stopped the day you died,
I put it away in a heavy, metal box,
Away from laughter and sunlight I
buried the box,

Beneath guilt, regrets and the pain of
not saying goodbye, deeply buried
under the pain of missing you,
I went searching for you in forests,
mountains, jungles, in deserts,
meadows, beaches,

Searching for a look, a trace, a
glimpse of you, but you came
looking for me in strange,
unexpected places,

You'd show up for a brief moment,
when least expected, bringing me a
bird, a song, a sign, unmistakably
you,

To show your love for me,
To comfort me,
To sustain me until we embrace
again.

By Karen Howe,
Compassionate Friends

March 13, 2023

ADVICE FROM BEREAVED PARENTS

As a bereaved parent, many aspects of grief may come as a surprise and/or catch you off guard. A group of bereaved parents got together and shared their thoughts about grief and things they didn't expect after losing a child. As you navigate this time, feel free to add to this list and share with people whom you trust.

Daily Activities

- Simple tasks take a great deal of energy
- Going to the grocery store will likely be a difficult task
- You may not feel like answering the phone, an email or text message and that is alright.
- Sleep can be challenging. You may have trouble sleeping, you might sleep more than normal, or you may need naps during the day that you didn't need before.
- You may find you are eating more or eating less or binging. We all cope differently.
- Drinking may take the pain away for a little while, but sooner or later it won't be enough.
- It may feel strange to talk about your child who died in everyday conversations, but don't let that stop you. If you take the lead and talk about your child, others will feel more comfortable doing the same.
- Reading through condolence cards can be overwhelming. Do this at your own pace and know that it's ok to cry. It's also ok to put cards aside and not read them for a while

“After my child died, I wondered how the rest of the world could continue to move forward when my world came to a screeching halt.” *Jamie, mother of Courtney*

Emotions

- Decision making may be difficult: just trying to decide what to have for dinner can be a struggle.
- It's ok to have a “good” day or feel happy.
- A good cry may also be therapeutic.
- It may be difficult to have patience for others, including family members.

Hobbies/Work

- It's ok to say no if someone asks you to do something and you don't have the energy.
- Going back to work can be difficult and there is no appropriate timeframe for returning.

- Make the decision that is best for you.
- It may be difficult to read a book (or focus on anything)
- Certain songs can trigger emotion when you least expect it.

Self Care

- You might need a therapist, but it may take a herculean effort to call. Asking a friend for help is ok.
- Everyone grieves differently.
- Grief often comes in waves, it is ok to let the emotions come when they start to bubble up.
- Setting aside intentional time or going to a special place where you let yourself grieve and feel the emotions can be helpful.
- You are not alone. Other families have experienced the loss of a child and conversations with them can be quite helpful
- You may find that you need help today but down the road you may find that you are helping someone else.

Important Dates

- Birthdays, holidays and anniversaries feel empty without your loved one.
- Time will not heal all wounds or make the pain go away, but it does change things.
- You learn at some point how to carry your loss and keep going.
- Your child does have a legacy. They had a profound, positive effect on you, your family and your community. His/her life matters.

Family and Friends

- People sometimes say the wrong thing. They are likely well-intended but inappropriate,
- Unless someone else has gone through it, they will never understand.
- It is ok to tell people what you need...they want to help.

Lovingly lifted from Bereaved Parents of the USA, Western New York Chapter, Winter 2023

JUST ONE MORE TIME

How many times have I woke on an Easter morning and smiled, knowing that the baskets were all set, the eggs dyed, and new clothes were waiting? How many times have I watched with joy as the little hands reached for chocolate bunnies and jellybeans? The joy of those mornings will forever be etched in memory, sitting, waiting for a time to be brought to remembrance.

The children are grown now, except one, who is forever frozen in time. The egg dye has been put away, the baskets hid in the attic with all the other keepable things from holidays and special events. The children now have children and they go on their way in life, except one, who is forever frozen in time. The new clothes to be worn are now packed away in storage boxes filled with mothballs, hoping to be kept forever, never to be worn by one gone from my sight.

The waking hours of that Easter morn are different now. No longer do I lie in my bed and wait for those sounds of joy and laughter coming down the hall. The children are all grown now, except one, and she is gone from me. She was too old for childish things, stuffed bunnies and jellybeans, yet too young to give it all up. “Just one more year, mama, let me hold on to my youth and enjoy the wonders of that day”, she said. Just one more year. Now she is gone, forever frozen in time, and her memory is engraved in my mind.

“Just one more time”...

In memory of
Ashley Marie

*Barbara Sockwell
TCF/Lawrenceville,
GA*



BEING PUBLIC TAKES ITS TOLL

When one is pretending the entire body revolts

Anais Nin

As we attempt to return to our jobs or our social life, or just to leave the house to do errands, we may feel that we must hold our heads up and keep acting brave. So we talk about things that don't interest us instead of talking about what plagues our heart and mind. We reluctantly agree to do things in which we do not have the slightest bit of interest.

All of this takes a tremendous amount of energy. But it does something else, too, Our bodies are under a great deal of stress as we work through our child's death. Trying to create and maintain an artificial front contributes to that stress. And stress, of course , manifests itself in many ways throughout the body — in headaches, rashes, insomnia, digestive disturbances, the inability to concentrate, and the impulse to fidget or be on the move. We may also have more colds and flues as well as unexplained pain in various parts of our bodies.

One of the kindest things we can do for ourselves is to behave, as much as is possible and reasonable, in accordance with our deepest needs and desires. We can greatly reduce the amount of time and effort we put into doing what only seems socially required.

I will not push myself into false situations or require myself to perform in a way that differs significantly from my truest self. I will take care of myself by not forcing certain actions or responses, regardless of the pressure put on me to do so. Myself, my body comes first, and I need to remember that my body will revolt against pretending.

Carol Staudacher
From *A Time to Grieve*

MOTHER'S DAY: "BEFORE" AND "AFTER"

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Shifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-Mom and stick-daughter standing alongside a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lop-sided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina."

Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up! Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories.

As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom", chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need any more "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Day after Nina died was a grief numbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten.

I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have. This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I know who have buried children there to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's grave-site on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is.

Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life – you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you – they are your child's gift to you.

By: Cathy Seehuetter

Posted on www.thecompassionatefriends.com website

On May 27, 2022



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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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