



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

ALBANY/HAROLD MITCHELL CHAPTER & SARATOGA SPRINGS CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

WWW.TCFALBANY.ORG
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JANUARY—FEBRUARY
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

Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better. Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in

moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it. Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were able to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us. This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs. Have a happier New Year!

*By: Pat Akery,
TCF, Medford, OR*

PROMISES OF RAINBOWS

I promise not to offer
Rainbows after storms
or silver linings beyond the clouds,
but if you have tears of sorrow,
I will share them.

If you have words of anger,
I will hear them.
If you have moments of confusion,
I will help you through them.

Perhaps your tears of sorrow today
will water the seeds
of tomorrow's garden,
of spiritual growth,
of worthy priorities,
of loving relationships and genuine
understanding and compassion.

My sad friend, your weeping is not
fruitless.

*By Nancy Williams
TCF Marlboro, NJ*



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.

*You don't die
when
your child
does...
the horror of it
is
you are going
to live*

Happy Birthday **TOM GALARNEAU** - always missed and never forgotten - 1/11/71 - greatest day for all who love you so very much.

Love, Mom, Brother Don, niece Margaret Irene

In loving memory of our beloved grandson, **CHRISTOPHER S. BASCOM**, who died tragically at age 16. This gift is in honor of his 31st birthday, December 1, 2017.

Love, Grandma Jan and Gramps

In loving memory of **THOMAS J. PERSICO** on the 21st anniversary of his death on January 6th. The memory of your bright smile lives on. You are always in our thoughts and forever in our hearts.

Love, Your Family

Love Gift from Albert and Ingrid Deresienski



In loving memory of **JASMINE JOHNSON** on New Year's morning.

In the midst of winter I discovered that there was in me an invincible summer

- Albert Camus

When I see these words at Double H Ranch, I remember your strength. You loved that place and when I am there, you are still there, too, your favorite place in the world. Those words cut into my heart because that is how you lived. I am not the same person without you, but you trained me to be the aunt Jordan would need. Your medical team all say he is just like you in every way, and that makes me happy.

Aunt Dale

VALENTINE MESSAGE

I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this planet,
A message filled with love
Yet also filled with pain.
My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop to catch my breath.
Valentine's Day is for those who love

And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.
I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's Day
With a heart that is forever broken.

By Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

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

FEELINGS

Her clothing is folded in tidy array
How it was left is how it will stay.
Her desolate dresser silently weeps
In the still of the night when everyone sleeps.
The closet continues to guard and protect
Items hanging on hangers forlorn with neglect.
The bed she adored, where she bounced high with glee
Cries invisible tears when no one can see.
The bathtub she splashed in will not again see
Someone who will love it as fiercely as she
It sits idle now, no longer a “star”
And asks (in its way) if I know where you are
The house that she lived in,
The yard where she played
Are missing the landscape of life that she laid
Her numerous playthings, her once favorite toy
Languish mournfully now without any joy.
This dwelling called “home” has relinquished its heart,
That gift from the one who was forced to depart.
Now it withers from grief, its spirit extinct.
And we watch through our tears,
As the walls seem to shrink.
Our angel was gone in the blink of an eye,
She took the light with her that day in July.
Yet there are times when my heart feels her near,
Then I know she’s not left me...
Her love is still here.

*By Sally Miglaccio
TCF West Islip, NY*

**I THINK ALL OF US CAN SEE
SOME KIND OF SIGN FROM
OUR LOVED ONES, IF WE
ARE OPEN-MINDED
ENOUGH TO BELIEVE,
AND I AM.**

Rea B. Ellithorpe

LIVE NOW

THE HOLIDAYS ARE OVER! We have survived one more hurdle. Now a whole year faces us. 365 days. It’s rather frightening. Isn’t it? Would it be less frightening if I suggested you have only one day to face: it’s true. **ALL YOU HAVE TO FACE IS TODAY - THIS 24 HOURS.** There isn’t much we can’t do if we only have to do it for 24 hours. Even the torment of our grief can be handled for 24 hours. We can get through the next 365 days one day at a time. In order to take one day at a time, we must learn to keep ourselves in the NOW. When our minds start wandering back to yesterday and the painful yesterdays before that we need to make every effort to consider that yesterday, with its pains, hurts, and yes, even its mistakes, is gone now and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. When our minds wander to tomorrow and we begin to panic at the thoughts of another day of torment, we can block out those thoughts too. We can bring ourselves back to the NOW by paying strict attention to what is going on in the immediate present. What if our responsibilities right now won’t allow us to give in to our pain? Our other children need our attention or our job demands our attention? Then we must focus ourselves only on what we have to do at that moment. We can only think of one thing at a time. What if we are having one of those moments of enjoying ourselves? Then we should enjoy. We deserve it. Emotionally we have been battered. It is essential to have a few moments of relief occasionally. By laughing and having a few forgetful seconds, surely we aren’t really betraying our child. And what if we are just having a crazy, mixed up, hurting, enjoying, crying, laughing, getting things done in the morning, getting nothing done in the afternoon kind of day? So what! Maybe the next 24 hours will be different. By concentrating on the NOW, we add up the minutes and the hours. Eventually we complete a day. Days become weeks, then months. Then one day we realize, GEE, I’m feeling a little better! A whole lot better! By taking one day at a time, living in the present, I guarantee that life will take on meaning once again.

*By Margaret Gerner
BP/USA
St. Louis , MO chapter*

TOMORROW...

I'll try to understand her,
 Try to understand the excitement behind
 Those piercing hazel eyes.
 Try to understand her zeal for life, tireless energy
 And love for others.

TOMORROW...

I'll sit down beside her and get to know
 This big sister of mine.
 I'll get to know the skinny little girl
 I grew up with and shared a bedroom with,
 For all our childhood years.

TOMORROW...

I'll ask her about her boyfriend
 I'll ask her about her girlfriends.
 I'll even ask her what her favorite subject
 Is in school.

TODAY?

I'm too busy.
 I have too much to do.
 She's getting on my nerves.

TODAY...

She's borrowing my clothes and ruining them.
 Today she's telling me to do all those chores for her.
 Today she's asking stupid questions
 I just don't feel like answering.

TODAY...

I'm too tired
 But tomorrow, I'll tell her I love her.
 I'll hug her and tell her she's pretty,
 I'll tell her I'm glad I have a sister...

TOMORROW

Finally came and now she is gone!

By: Jean Anne Read, TCF, Tulsa, OK

CLOSURE

This brings me to the dreaded "C" word.
 A word hated by the bereaved, "closure".
 I hate that word. I am offended by that word.
 Most of the bereaved I know dislike it too.
 There is no such thing as closure - you
 Never get over it and quit expecting us to.
 People need to learn to say something else...

These things are so true -
 You close a book,
 You close a closet,
 You may even close a chapter of your life.

But you never close the life of your child, a loved
 one. There is never "closure".

*By Patricia Unzicker
 David 's Mom*

If you meet me friend and wonder why,
 A tear is always in my eye,
 It's because I suffered the greatest loss.
 Yes mine has been a heavy cross.

My first thought every morning,
 My last thought every night,
 And every moment in between,
 Somehow it just seems right.

Why one so loved and cherished
 Should make the choice to die,
 I curse that medication,
 And ask my Savior why.

Part of my heart went with him,
 I struggle day by day.
 To live this life as best I can,
 Yet wonder why I stay.

Many here still love me and I them in return,
 But for this link - my special son
 I will forever yearn.

The day will come - we'll meet again.
 This will be in the past.
 For even death cannot conquer love,
 It will last forever.

*By: May McDonald
 TCF, Southwestern Manitoba*

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

It was nine years ago on July 18, 1992 that two police officers came to our door with news that no parent expects or wants to hear. “We are sorry to inform you that your son was killed by a suspected drunk driver tonight.”

SHOCK - My first reaction was disbelief. How could Marc be dead? He has his whole life ahead of him. He was driving a friend home and I was waiting up for him. No, this can't be! But it was the harsh reality that I could not fathom at that moment that caused me to slip into the nice protective overcoat named “SHOCK.” Thank goodness for the shock factor because that is what allowed me to make the necessary arrangement for the days that were to follow.

ANGER - From the minute I was told that Marc had died I was angry with God. I talked, screamed and wrote in my journal about being so mad that God did not protect us under His umbrella that I thought was in place for our family. No, I do not believe that God planned for Marc to die at age nineteen or even that it was God's will. It has taken me years to understand that we, all of us have “free will” and one 42 year-old man used his “free will” to drink and drive that fateful night that killed our son within one mile of our home.

BARGAINING - The funeral was held here and a week later we drove home to Topeka, Kansas where we had a Memorial Service for friends and family. We drove back to Georgia arriving late one night after the 14-hour drive. I unpacked a few things in the kitchen while my husband was taking a shower. When I had finished I tried to climb the stairs, but I froze and then fell grasping at the carpet on the stairs sobbing loudly in the entryway. I cried out to God asking, “Why didn't He take me instead?” I told him he could make the change right here, right now and no one would ever know the difference.

PAIN - As the shock began to wear off, I felt the intense excruciating pain. It was so deep and cut like a knife. I thought that the pain was going to kill me it hurt so bad. It felt like someone had ripped my heart out. I felt gutted and empty inside. I was surprised to learn that grief is not just about feeling sad. When you experience grief, there is a real physical pain and mine was in my chest that hurt for many months every waking moment. I remember I wanted to die. More importantly I wanted to be with Marc.

TEARS - I did not know there were so many different ways to cry or different sounds one could make while crying. I would be sitting in my chair and begin to cry and invariably I would end up on the floor, face down in the carpet crying my eyes out. At other times, I rocked back and forth sobbing so hard and speaking gibberish that even I could not understand what I was saying. Our older son told me that I even cried in my sleep because he had heard me one night.

DEPRESSION - I kept the drapes down that first year and withdrew from the world. I was like a frightened animal huddled in a corner. My first thought upon waking each morning was that Marc was dead. I would curl up in a fetal position and cry. I had trouble concentrating, remembering things and making decisions. My mind would wander constantly. I had no energy - none - zip! I remember being so proud of myself the time that I completed mopping my kitchen floor that had taken me three days to do.

RECONCILIATION - I am nine years into my grief journey. For me, it has been about “leaning into my pain” and stumbling around in the dark searching and trying different ways to cope since the death of our son, Marc. I read grief books, I journal, I attend bereavement seminars, I visit the cemetery and most importantly, I cry.

“DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT” - but stand toe to toe with the beast called grief! Do not be afraid of your thoughts, feelings, and pain. They are ALL normal reactions to the death of our dear child. Instead I ask you to wrestle grief down to the ground, screaming, kicking and crying until you have made grief your equal and more manageable.

I heard a speaker say, “we did not expect to outlive our child, but we can make a choice as to whether we will become bitter or better with the time we have left.” Let's begin to take control of our life, picking up the pieces and make the choice to be a better person. If not for ourselves, let's do it for our children.

*By: Susan Van Vleck
TCF Marietta Chapter, GA
In memory of our children*



Leadership

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Albany Co-Leader: Kathleen Kelleher 439-1114

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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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