



The Compassionate Friends

Pittsburgh Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

©2015 The Compassionate Friends, Pittsburgh Chapter

July/August/September Summer 2019

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide knowledge to help others to be supportive.

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is an international non-profit, self-help support organization which offers friendship and understanding and hope to families who are grieving the death of a child of any age from any cause. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership fees or dues, and all bereaved family members are welcome.

The Compassionate Friends was originally founded in England in 1969. The first U.S. Chapter was organized in 1972. The Pittsburgh Chapter began in 1978.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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PITTSBURGH PA CHAPTER

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REGIONAL COORDINATOR

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United Way #2647



Summer Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held at **Bower Hill Community Church**

from **2:30 - 5:30 p.m.**

70 Moffett St, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15243 (off of Bower Hill Road)

Please sign in at the welcome table on the lower level of the church.

PLEASE NOTE!! ALL NEW MEMBERS WHO ARE ATTENDING A MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME, PLEASE ARRIVE BEFORE 1:30 PM TO SIGN IN.

You will then join the regular meeting at 2:30.

SUNDAY, JULY 28, 2019

Our speakers will be **Sue Wesner, MSN**, and **Kelly Monk, BSN, RN** from the Survivors of Suicide (SOS) program, a support group for bereaved family members and close friends of those who have died by suicide.

The Special Sharing will be on *Suicide*.

Sharing Groups:

1st time attending, Newly Bereaved Up to One Year, Grief 1-2 years,
3-5 years, over 5 years and Siblings Over 16 Years

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2019

Our program will be our **5th Annual Butterfly Release**. Please see page 7 for more information on this special event.

The butterfly release will take the place of our regular monthly meeting. There will be no sharing sessions after the release, but please join us for refreshments in the church's Fellowship Hall.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

Our program will be a viewing of a DVD called **Whispers of Loss: Signs of Our Loved Ones**, with Mitch Carmody. *The butterfly that shows up just at the right moment, the penny in your shoe, an orb in your photograph, or that dream that was so real and vivid featuring your loved one who has died. Are all these things coincidence? Or could it be that our loved ones are sending us a little whisper of love to let us know they are right here with us?*

The Special Sharing will be an opportunity for our members to share stories about the signs they have received from their loved ones

Sharing Groups:

1st time attending, Newly Bereaved Up to One Year, Grief 1-2 years,
3-5 years, over 5 years and Siblings Over 16 Years

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Directions To Bower Hill Community Church:

70 Moffett Street, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15243

Downtown: through Fort Pitt Tunnels. Exit 5A Banksville Rd. (Rte 19S), bearing right onto Banksville Rd. for 2.3 miles. The last few blocks of Banksville Rd. become McFarland Rd. before you bear right on to Beverly Rd. Go 0.6 miles to Cochran Rd., turn left and go 0.2 miles to Bower Hill Rd. Turn right and go 0.5 miles and turn right on to Moffett St. Bower Hill Community Church is on the right.

From Rt. 19: when you enter Mt. Lebanon, follow signs for Washington Rd. At light turn on Bower Hill Rd. Continue 1.7 miles on Bower Hill Rd and turn right on to Moffet Street. Parking available in the North Parking Lot of the church.

From Airport: East on I-376 to I-79S/Pittsburgh (Exit 64A). Take Exit 55 (Heidelberg/Collier). Take the Washington Pike ramp toward Bridgeville, then slight right onto Washington Pike/PA-50. Turn left onto Vanadium Road. Go about 1.5 miles, turn left onto Bower Hill Road. Go straight about 2.5 miles, then turn left onto Moffet St. Church is on the right.

New Members Greeted Recently

We welcome the following new friends who have attended their first Compassionate Friends meeting recently. We are truly sorry that you have experienced the death of your child, sibling or grandchild. We sincerely hope we will be able to offer you some understanding and support. Coming to your first meeting may be the hardest step you have made since the death of your child. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not it will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting may be the time you will find the right person – or just the right words that will help you in your journey.

Remember . . . You need not walk alone!!!

MARCH

CM & JM, parents of CM
KS, mother of CN

APRIL

JC & DC, parents of AC

SS, mother of BS

MAY

JS & RS, parents of JR



Home Meetings

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HOSTING A HOME MEETING?

Home meetings give TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter members, particularly new ones, the opportunity to meet with a small group in a more intimate setting. Often, a monthly sharing just isn't enough, as members long to talk about and share memories of their child, grandchild, or sibling with others on a more frequent basis. We will guide you through the specifics, although it is rather simple. It is opening your home and hearts to others who are struggling to move forward in the grieving process. In the past, home meetings have been held in the eastern, western, northern, and southern regions of Pittsburgh. Meetings can be held on the day of your choosing, and they have typically been held in the evenings.

TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter's trained facilitators will be available to provide support and guidance for the home meetings.

If you are interested in hosting a home meeting or would like more information, please contact Megan Talbot (814-860-4732 or coleader@tcpittsburgh.org). We will provide meeting information (dates,

hosts' names, address, and contact information) at our monthly meetings, where our members will be able to sign up to attend one or more meetings.

NORTH HILLS AREA:

July 18, August 15

and September 19 at 7 p.m.

Please see the website for contact information if you are interested in attending.

We ask that you contact the hosts at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to let them know that you plan to attend. If no RSVPs have been received 24 hours prior to the meeting, the host may cancel the meeting. If your plans change and you cannot attend, please notify the host family immediately. If you are uncertain whether the meeting is going to take place, please contact the host.



LOVING LISTENERS & REMEMBERING FRIENDS

If waiting until the next meeting is too long and you want to talk, the following people may be contacted. They are willing to listen. They understand what you are going through and they do care. Feel free to call them when you need them.

- SIBLINGS (over 16)** Carlotta Harbaugh - 412-859-0303
- GRANDPARENTS** Mary McGrath - 412-527-7248
- ALL CHILDREN**..... Gene & Rose Sprando - 724-947-3130
- YOUNG CHILDREN** Martina Hartland - 412-245-7048
- STILLBORN, MISCARRIAGE, INFANT DEATH**..... Jen Geis - 412-841-1701
- SIDS**..... Dee Dee Pelled - 412-521-7668
- LEGAL ISSUES**..... Jeff Bragdon - 412-600-4675
- FATHERS**..... John Urso - 412-847-8337
- SUICIDE** Sandy Economou - 724-457-9117
- DRUG OVERDOSE** Mary Jane Marculaitis - 412-916-2094

IF YOU CANNOT REACH ANY OF THESE NUMBERS, PLEASE CALL 412-835-1105

TCF PITTSBURGH
Chapter Notes

Save the Dates! - Please make a note of our events coming up later in the year:

- **Spaghetti dinner** - October 27, 2019 - see details below!
- **Candlelight Remembrance service** - December 8, 2019 – look for details in our next newsletter

Spaghetti Dinner – October 27, 2019

Please join us for a delicious spaghetti dinner after our monthly meeting on **October 27th** from 5 – 7 p.m. in Bower Hill Community Church’s Fellowship Hall. Dinner will be available for dine-in or take-out and will include spaghetti, meatballs, salad, bread, dessert, and a beverage.

Tickets are **\$10 for adults and \$7 for children** and will be available for purchase at our Butterfly Release (8/25/2019) and at the monthly meetings, or can be purchased by sending the following information

ALONG WITH PAYMENT to:

Susanna Zawacki • 239 Wilkins Ave • E Pittsburgh, PA 15112

Please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends – Pittsburgh Chapter

(Feel free to fill this section out and mail it in with your payment, or use a separate piece of paper)

Name _____

Phone or Email _____

Dine-in Take-out

_____ # of Adult Tickets @ \$10 each = \$ _____

_____ # of Child Tickets @ \$7 each = \$ _____

Total enclosed (adult + child) \$ _____

Thank you! Hope to see you there!

Our Condolences...

To the family and friends of **Diane M**, a long-time member our chapter who passed away in March. Diane joined TCF after the tragic deaths of her sons, Lamont and Lionel, who had been hit by a drunk driver while they were delivering newspapers one summer morning in 1987. Diane had a talent for needlepoint, which she shared with TCF by stitching beautiful name tags for our members. Diane took the time to stitch not just our members’ names on the tags, but also the names and dates of our loved ones who died, along with a colorful butterfly. One the back, she would add a label which said, “Hand-stitched in loving memory of (name) by Diane M.” Diane will be greatly missed by all of us here at TCF’s Pittsburgh Chapter who knew her for so many years.

Our hearts mourn when a loved-one departs, but with courage we learn to accept their absence in our lives. In gratitude, we appreciate the time that was given. And with love, the memories are not forsaken. We continue to create new ones so we can smile again.

~Dodinsky

TCF PITTSBURGH
5th Annual Butterfly Release

Our 5th annual butterfly release will be held on **Sunday, August 25, 2019 at 2:30 p.m.** on the lawn of Bower Hill Community Church. Upon arrival, each registered TCF family will receive a complimentary monarch butterfly to release in memory of their loved one as well as any extra butterflies that they may have ordered. Additional butterflies will be available for purchase at the event. The afternoon will include a brief memorial service followed by a reading of the names of those we have loved and lost. Light refreshments will be served indoors following the butterfly release. **We invite you to bring a dozen cookies or other treats to share, along with a picture of your loved one, to the event.**

The butterfly release will take the place of our regular meeting in August.

For your comfort, **please bring a blanket or lawn chair to the butterfly release.** We will **NOT** be able to provide any chairs this year. Members **MUST** provide their own chairs/blankets to sit on.

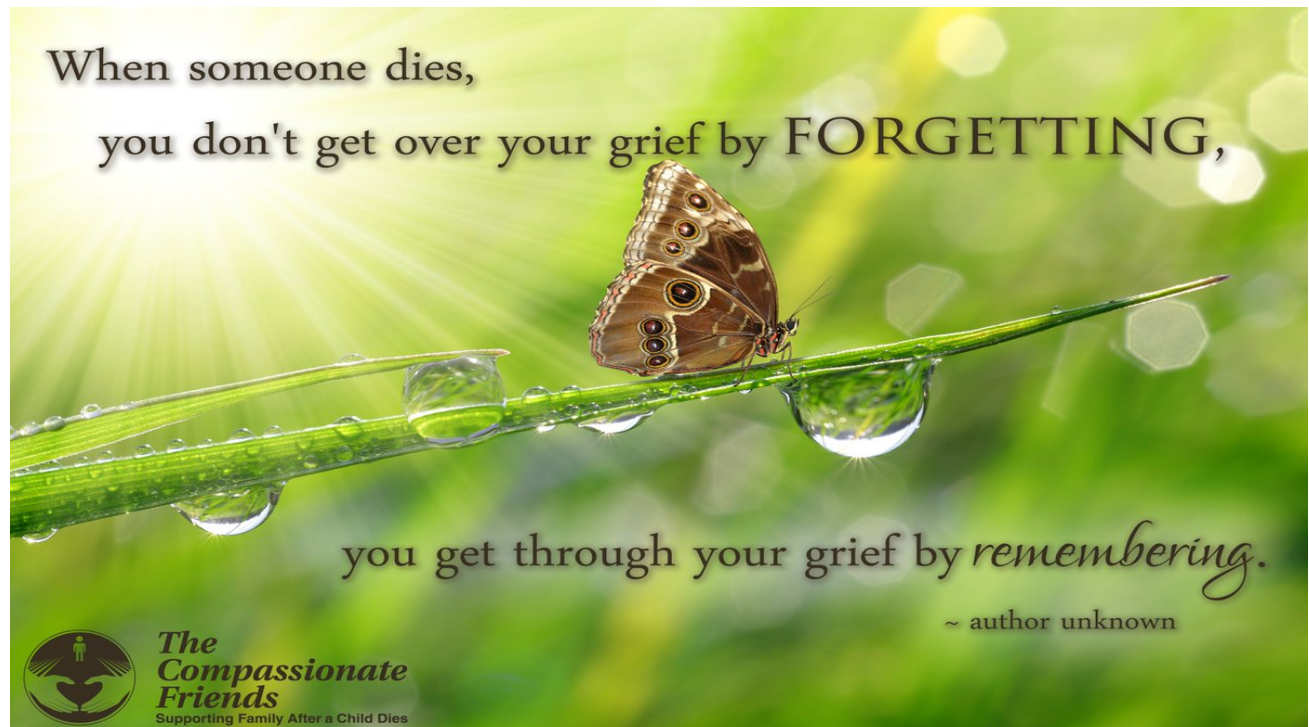
In case of heavy rain, we will hold the service indoors and you will take your butterflies with you for release after the rain.

REMINDER: The butterfly release will start PROMPTLY at 2:30 p.m.!

We hope to see you there!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Please consider volunteering to plan for and/or help us out on the day of this special event. Putting on an event of this size takes a lot of planning and work, and we would appreciate any help from others that we can get! If interested, please contact Mary Jane Marculaitis (412-916-2094) or Megan Talbot (814-860-4732). Thank you!



Butterflies Make Me Happy

Sometimes in our grief we truly believe we are going crazy. We hurt so bad we don't think we can manage to go on living without our precious child here with us. Part of the grieving process is learning how to do just that. Some parents need the reassurance that their child is okay. I think the human mind can only take so much pain and jumps at the chance to see signs from their children, reassuring them that they are okay.

The way I look at it, if you get comfort from a dream or a sign...enjoy it. You've suffered enough, and believing in signs, butterflies, dreams or what ever else gives you comfort and hurts no one else, is your right as a bereaved person.

Are these signs real, or just in my imagination? Can I prove they are messages from my son? Does it even need to be proven? No, I can't scientifically prove it. But I know that dreams, butterflies, signs and enjoyment in nature makes me feel closer to Eric and therefore I will continue to enjoy them. It hurts no one, I'm not obsessive about it and anyone who chooses to think I'm nuts for believing in such things, can think I'm nuts.

We've all heard how the butterfly is a symbol of rebirth. Whether it's our child moving from this world onto a higher plane, or a bereaved parent emerging from the cocoon of grief into a world without our child here. With us, butterflies are a comfort for many. When I'm missing my son and see a butterfly flitting from flower to flower, I smile and feel better. When I'm in a happy mood and see a butterfly, I enjoy the beauty of such a delicate creature. Taking the time to slow down and watch such a fragile creature going about its business is calming and I don't think anyone should discount the benefits from having a calming moment.

About four months after Eric died, I had a dream about him. I woke myself up from tears of joy running down my face, I knew he was okay...what a relief that was. I still hurt terribly and missed him more than I thought I could endure, but I felt comforted by the dream. Some could say it was my subconscious trying to sort things out, but I choose to believe it was his way of trying to comfort me. Either way, it made me feel better.

Maybe it's because bereaved parents walk around in such a fog and function on automatic pilot that we are moving slow enough to notice the signs that are around us. Maybe dreams are one way for us to accept messages we need to hear and take into our hearts without logically trying to interpret them. Maybe faith is what we rely on when nothing else makes sense and we instinctively know we need something to hold on to. Whatever it is, just give me a second helping; I like feeling closer to my son!

**Lynn Vines, TCF South Bay/L.A., CA
In Memory of my son, Eric**

Come Sit With Me

Come sit with me awhile and let me
Hold your hand, I understand your
Sorrow and know you need a friend.

I understand the pain that lies within your heart,
I have felt the silent screams that tear you all apart

I know about the sleepless nights that last so very long,
I understand the emptiness when you hear that special song.

Come share with me your memories and let me be
Your friend, you can cry, laugh or say nothing at all,
And I will understand.

Come sit with me my friend, I'll try to help you through.
I understand my friend, for I have been there too.

Judy Peckinpugh, TCF Inland Empire, CA

A Visitor

Yesterday, an out of town acquaintance stopped by. We could easily be friends, if days were longer and our lives not so complicated. After small talk pleasantries, he grew silent and pensive. I knew then this was more than a social call. It was apparent his pain was deep, and he was struggling to start what would be a difficult conversation. He looked up from his lap, and he told me I was the first person he has talked to about this because he knew I would understand.

He spoke of his daughter who had recently attempted suicide, the details of which are unimportant here. His eyes welled up, and he unsuccessfully fought their overflowing. His lip trembled, and as I handed him a tissue, he asked me what he did wrong. He asked me how he could have missed his daughter's significant suffering. It is so apparent he loves his daughter unconditionally and supports her emotionally, academically, and socially. And yet, he feels as though he somehow let her down, causing her to take this drastic step.

As I looked at him through my own tears, I saw myself eleven months ago. In his voice, I heard my own asking those same questions. And just as I was told by so many, "It is not your fault," I know those words sounded hollow when I spoke them to him.

We carefully choose our children's school districts, teachers, classes, and extracurricular activities, to develop our children into caring, successful, intelligent beings. We monitor their media intake and their friendships. We provide quality family time to be sure we stay connected. We have those important and difficult conversations to help prepare them for adulthood. And yet, even if we do everything as "right" as we possibly can, something we can't yet understand happens in some of our children, leading them into a spiraling darkness, unable to ask even those who love them the most for help. And so many do such a good job of hiding their symptoms, we are unaware of their pain while sitting right beside it.

Through tears, my visitor asked me what happens next. The most painful part of the conversation was explaining his journey will likely be harder than mine, because Tom was successful on his first attempt, so my journey with my son is over. But his daughter survived her attempt, so his journey is just beginning. Just as he cannot imagine my pain, I cannot imagine his.

**Kimberly Starr, TCF Facebook Loss to Suicide Group
In Memory of my son Tom**

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Bridget

1977 - 2006

Thirteen years I have been writing you letters and it gets harder each year. The longer you are gone, the more I miss you. This letter is all about Maxwell, your seven pound Yorkie.

Maxwell was a birthday gift to you in 2005-he picked you as his adoptive mother and you enjoyed him for sixteen months until your fatal car accident. Maxwell didn't pick me but I became his new parent.

The day of your accident, Carlotta and I went to your apartment to get him. He didn't understand and was very confused as to what happened to you. CORE was notified and got your body immediately. Upon completion you were returned to us and we made the funeral arrangements. I took Maxwell to see you but again he was confused. For the next twelve and a half years, I was his parent but he never stopped looking for you.

Life is a cruel joke! I knew Maxwell was getting older but I never expected what happened:

- February 6, 2019-Maxwell went to the groomers-he was so handsome!
- February 11, 2019-Maxwell's annual check up.
- February 12, 2019-Maxwell's blood results showed kidney problems and I was told 6-12 months to live.
- February 18, 2019-Maxwell spent hours at the ER and they wanted to keep him but I wouldn't leave him alone so we took him home. Carlotta became his private nurse. She came twice a day to give him IV's.
- February 22, 2019-Friday at 3am Maxwell lost his battle to kidney failure, he died in my arms.

I never left him alone, that was my promise to you and I kept that promise.

I had Maxwell cremated and he is in a beautiful urn next to your picture. After 13 years you two are together again. I know the Pearly Gates contained a doggy door. I feel Maxwell is with me at all times and Owen told me he can hear Maxwell bark. As long as I had Maxwell I had you. Love just wasn't enough-so sad!

We love and miss you both!

Mom, Carlotta, Tom, Chris, Taylor, TJ, Cara, Owen & Jayden

Josh

1996 - 2017

IN MEMORIAM

Loving Memories of a Special Son

*To lose someone so special
is really hard to bear
it hardly seems believable
that you're no longer here*

*You left us far too early
before your time, it seems
and now you'll never have the chance
to fulfill all those dreams*

*However hard it is though
we'll take comfort in the thought
of all the memories we have
and the happiness you brought*

*You always lived life to the full
but ours won't be the same
until the day when we can see
your smiling face again*

*We love and miss you tremendously Joshie!
Keep sending us butterflies from Heaven Josh.*

*Love,
Mom, Dad, Emily and Grandma*

**FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS
FOREVER 21 J5M**

2nd Anniversary

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR
SON*Michael*

1976 - 2008

*Well Michael another year is coming when we would
celebrate your birthday! Sure wish you were here with us. We
miss you so much but we have a lot of memories to remember
you. You are so special to us & we keep you in our prayers &
thoughts!!*

Happy Birthday!!

Lots of love, Mom, Dad, Tracie & Geoff XXX

*If possible, please email poems/remembrances for
the newsletter to editor@tcfpittsburgh.org
Thank you!*

A love gift is a contribution to honor our children, grandchildren, and siblings, who have died or a memorial for a relative or friend. To contribute a love gift, simply mail in the form below with your gift. There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF and *funds received are used for printing and mailing expenses, for purchasing library materials, and miscellaneous chapter expenses*. These gifts are frequently given on the anniversary or birthday dates or in lieu of flowers when someone has died. Your donation is tax deductible.

PLEASE NOTE: *If you wish to send a love gift or submit a poem for your loved one's birthday or anniversary date, please send the information to the post office address listed on the donation form (rather than dropping it in the mailbox at the monthly meetings), so that we can be sure it is acknowledged in the appropriate monthly newsletter.*

We thank the following people for their kind generosity, love and sharing:

♥ Love Gifts ♥

LLD, in memory of her daughter, DLD, and grandson, DLD

TF & DF, in memory of their son, JDF

PG & CG, in memory of their daughter, LG, and brother, MP

BH, in memory of her son, JGH, Jr.

GJ & KJ, in memory of their daughter, KCJ

AK, in memory of her grandson, DR

RK & BK, in memory of their son, JK

TM & CH, in memory of their daughter and sister, BM

CM, BM & EM, in memory of their son and brother, JM

RAM, in memory of his son, RM

RR, in memory of her grandson, JM

JLR, in memory of her daughter, ERB

GS & RMS, in memory of their son, RS, and daughter, RS

BT & LT, in memory of their son, JT

LOVE GIFT DONATION FORM - PLEASE SEND THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK

LOVE GIFTS are a loving memorial to our children, grandchildren and siblings, usually given on birthdays, anniversaries, holidays etc. Your gift may be accompanied by a poem or article for your loved one's special day.

I, (PRINT YOUR NAME) _____ wish to make a donation

in memory of my: Son Daughter Sister Brother Grandson Granddaughter _____

(PRINT THEIR NAME) _____

Their Date of Birth: _____ Their Date of Death: _____

PLEASE NOTE: All love gifts, poems, etc. for the **October-November-December 2019 newsletter** must be received by **September 1, 2019**.

Please make checks payable to: **THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS** and mail to: **P.O. Box 15495, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**
Please be sure to send all love gifts and poems to our mailing address above so that the love gift can be acknowledged in the correct month of your loved one's birthday or anniversary.



*The
Compassionate
Friends*
Pittsburgh Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Membership Renewal Form 2019

The National Office of The Compassionate Friends requires that our members' permission forms be renewed and/or updated annually.

Every year, The Compassionate Friends - Pittsburgh Chapter asks our members to review their membership information and renew their request to receive the newsletter. In this way, we are able to confirm member interest in our newsletter while keeping printing and mailing costs to a minimum.

Please complete this form and return it by September 1, 2019 to:

Susanna Zawacki
239 Wilkins Avenue
E. Pittsburgh, PA 15112

Or email to: editor@tcfpittsburgh.org

PLEASE NOTE: If we do not receive your completed form by the due date, you will be removed from our membership roster and our mailing list.

Name: _____

___ My address / phone number / email address have not changed.

___ I have a new mailing address, phone number, or email address. (Please provide changes below)

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: () _____ Email address: _____

___ I would like to receive the newsletter via email. ***Please provide your email address above.***

Please confirm your permission to include your loved one(s) name and birthday / anniversary dates in our newsletter. Without your permission, we cannot add their name(s) to the Remembrance pages.

___ Please continue to remember my child, sibling or grandchild on their birthday and anniversary dates.

___ I would like to rescind my permission to print their names/dates in the newsletter.

WE NEED YOU!!! *The Compassionate Friends is a support group run entirely by volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering some of your time now or in the future, please check the areas that appeal to you. Thank you!*

- Co-Leader Help at monthly meetings (greeters, set-up/tear-down, refreshments)
 Library Newsletter editor Office/Telephone/Outreach Secretary Treasurer

**The Compassionate Friends
Pittsburgh Chapter
P.O. Box 15495
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
Return Service Requested
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NEXT ISSUE WILL BE
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019
ALL LOVE GIFTS, ARTICLES AND SPEAKERS
WILL BE DUE **BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2019**

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Susanna Zawacki
Editor
Linda Bloom

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contact editor@tcfpittsburgh.org

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

PLEASE NOTE: *Per National Office of The Compassionate Friends, the parents and siblings credo has been combined and the above version is the one we are to use for children, siblings and grandparents.*

We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.

TCF Pittsburgh Phone:
412-835-1105

Good Grief Center:
412-224-4700

**Highmark Caring Place: A Center for
Grieving Children, Adolescents & Their Families**
1-888-224-4673