



# The Compassionate Friends

## Pittsburgh Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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July/August/September • Summer 2020

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

Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
Toll Free: 1-877-969-0010  
Fax: 630-990-0246

Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

### PITTSBURGH PA CHAPTER

P.O. Box 15495  
Pittsburgh, PA 15237  
Phone: 412-835-1105  
Website: [www.tcfpittsburgh.org](http://www.tcfpittsburgh.org)

### PITTSBURGH CHAPTER CO-LEADERS

Megan Talbot: 814-860-4732  
[co-leader@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:co-leader@tcfpittsburgh.org)

### VACANT

[chapter.leader@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:chapter.leader@tcfpittsburgh.org)

### REGIONAL COORDINATOR

John Taylor:  
304-280-4389  
[taylorjohna@yahoo.com](mailto:taylorjohna@yahoo.com)

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 26, 2020 (VIRTUAL MEETING)

*Video: Open to Hope - Minding Your Grieving Soul*

Open To Hope is an on-line caring community, helping people find hope after loss. On this episode of their show, Dr. Gloria Horsley and her daughter, Dr. Heidi Horsley, discuss mindfulness and grief with their guests.

### SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2020

*Butterfly Release*

We will be holding our 6th annual Butterfly Release, but it will look a little different this year. Please see page 6 for details of this year's event, and page 11 for the invitation/order form.

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

*Topic: Mental Health*

The Steering Committee will present some information about mental health and suicide. Members will then be invited to participate in an open forum discussion about how they care for their mental health and what struggles or concerns they have in trying to maintain good mental health. The goal will be to bring awareness to these topics and to share with each other what has worked (and what hasn't) in our journeys towards positive mental health.

### — INSIDE THIS ISSUE —

Home Meetings, New Members,  
Loving Listeners  
Birthdays and Anniversaries  
Poems & Remembrances  
Seasonal Articles  
Love Gifts and Love Gift Form

#### 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 Moffett 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 Moffett 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!!!*

- S.C.
- M.D.
- AS & DS
- AT & DT
- Y.W.



*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@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:coleader@tcfpittsburgh.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 16, August 13**  
**and September 17 at 7 p.m.** Please see our website for details 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

### TCF Pittsburgh Chapter Notes

- Monthly meetings** – Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we are unable to meet in person at the church for the time being. We are planning online, virtual meetings through Zoom for July, August and possibly September (at the time of this printing, we are not sure if the church will allow large gatherings by then). If you'd like to participate in the meetings but do not have computer / Internet access, you can also call into the meeting (a call-in phone number will be provided for each meeting). Look for emails and/or phone calls with information on upcoming meetings. If you haven't shared your email address with us, please contact Susie at [editor@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:editor@tcfpittsburgh.org).
- Newsletter editor needed** – We are still in need of a new newsletter editor. Please contact Susie at [editor@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:editor@tcfpittsburgh.org) if interested or if you would like more information. If no one steps up to help, the newsletter will be different starting with the Winter 2021 edition. It may be much shorter and it may be delivered only through email. We may also consider alternative ways of keeping our members informed of upcoming meetings and events. Thank you!

#### **Butterfly Cross Stitch Raffle - Postponed**

Since we are not able to meet in person for this year's butterfly release, we have decided to postpone this raffle to either the Candlelight Service in December or sometime next year.



### **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Butterfly Release**

Our 6<sup>th</sup> annual butterfly release will be held on **Sunday, August 30, 2020**. We are not able to hold the release at the church this year, so our plans for this event have changed. We will still offer butterflies for our members (one complimentary monarch butterfly for each registered TCF family, plus any additional ones that you would like to purchase), but we will not have our usual program. Instead, we will distribute the butterflies at the church for you to take and release at home. We will have a virtual program through Zoom, although the details of the program are still undecided. We will keep everyone informed of our plans for the program through email and/or phone calls.

The invitation to the butterfly release can be found on **page 11** of this newsletter. Please fill it out and return it to us by the due date so that we know how many butterflies to order.

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

Dear Compassionate Friends,

The Pittsburgh Chapter Steering Committee and I know that these are difficult times for everyone. We recognize the challenges many of our members are facing and want you to know that we continue to be here for you in any way we can. We know how difficult stressful times can be for those who are already grieving, and we want you to know that we understand and are here to support you.

While we have had to suspend our in-person monthly meetings until further notice, our chapter has been holding monthly Zoom meetings instead and we have found them to be very helpful for our members. These meetings give us a chance to see and interact with the people we have come to depend on during our times of need, and they help to reassure us that, even while socially distanced, we truly “need not walk alone”. (Invitations for these meetings are being sent to the email addresses we have on file. If we do not have a current email address for you, please reach out to Susie at [editor@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:editor@tcfpittsburgh.org) with this information.)

We are also available to speak personally with members as needed. Please reach out to us at our chapter number (412) 835-1105 and leave a message with your name and phone number if you would like to speak with someone. These messages are checked daily and you should receive a call back within 24 hours. You may also send an email to any of the email addresses listed in this newsletter, and someone will reach out to you as soon as possible. (Please include your phone number if you would like to receive a phone call instead of an email response.) Our steering committee members and our “loving listeners” are available to speak with you throughout the entire month. *You do not need to wait until the next monthly meeting to get the support you need.*

Additionally, the National Office has set up online support through live chats and private Facebook groups. Information regarding these options can be found at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) under the “Find Support” tab and by selecting “Online Communities”. There are also videos available through the Compassionate Friends YouTube Channel and at “The Open to Hope Show” at <https://www.opentohope.com/tv/>.

***We are also pleased to announce that we have begun planning our Annual Butterfly Release.*** Due to circumstances beyond our control, we have made the difficult decision to hold a “virtual” release this year, but we will make butterflies available to our families for release at their individual homes. While this year’s event may look different, we feel it is important to continue to offer this event in any way that we can. Our members look forward to this event and it provides us with hope and healing. The Butterfly Release invitation can be found on the last page of this newsletter. *Please be sure to read it carefully and fill out the response form **completely** before returning it by the deadline.*

Finally, we want you to know that we will do our best to continue to update you regarding the changes and plans that are taking place for our local chapter, but we need your help. If we do not have a current email address for you, **PLEASE** reach out to Susie and provide us with one. While we know that not all members have access to email, *this is the quickest and easiest way for us to communicate with our members*. For those members who do not have email, please try to check our website regularly for updates. Finally, if you do not have internet access and NEED to receive updates by phone, please call our office and leave a message so that we can create a “call list”. (Please be sure to include your name, best contact number, and that you are requesting to be added to our phone list in your message.) *All of our members may be receiving phone calls regarding some of our updates from time to time. These calls may come in the form of a recorded message and/or a personal call from one of our steering members or volunteers.*

We have also created a survey to help us better understand how to help you. If you have not yet received it, please email one of us and we can forward you the link. If you would like a paper copy of the survey mailed to you, please call our office and leave a message requesting the survey and providing us with your name and home address. *You will need to return the survey to us by mail once it is completed.*

Our hope is that you are able to remain safe and healthy during this time. If you need us in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out. We welcome your comments, feedback, and concerns as we continue to work together to support our members during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Megan Talbot

TCF Pittsburgh, Leader

## SUMMER

Summer in Michigan can warm the heart and heat the body. There are soft silky nights spent viewing dots of light in the heavens. Beaches, barbecues, baseball, family reunions, fireworks, carnivals and cool drinks make the summer a special time of the year for a Midwesterner eager to shed winter's coat. School's out while vacations blend together for happy times. Even blue skies push the gray away in the peninsula state begging us to view, if not experience, the outdoors.

Someone is not there in their normal place and the season of the year will never change that fact. Determination to make "things" better is a laudable, though often quite challenging goal. Having a good time between spring and fall may be a difficult task when a good day may be a notable achievement. The simple act of attempting to have fun may be a simple, innocent act of honoring our child's memory. Every month seems to bring specific special thoughts and those fun times may bring along some unwanted baggage of sad moments that will never go away, but they will become more manageable, more easily carried.

It seems that if we keep busy sometimes "things" get better even if it's only for a little while. An idle mind is the devil's workshop is another one of those phrases that seem to finally have some meaning for the bereaved. Find something, anything, to occupy the mind and the heart will most likely follow, if only briefly. If there is no time to think then there is no time for heartache, and this fragile formula may work on occasion to soothe the soul, providing rare relief from the staggering, stunning, seemingly endless pain.

Other times it is just too overwhelming, too exhausting to keep one step ahead of the darkness that reality has inflicted. We are transported back to when "things" were different, normal, better, so briefly we let go of hope and that is ok, it happens. The fight for survival is not easy but it is possible. The struggle may be measured by where we have been, how far we have come, as well as where we are. Congratulate yourself for making it this far. We may share many similarities, but no one knows your hard road better than you.

I think that our son Brian is having the best summer of all. That is what I choose to think, choose to know, choose to feel. So when I close my eyes tonight I will remember fireworks and sparklers of the past, the amusement parks yet to be visited. The happy faces of yesterday's memories will visit while dreaming of the hugs of tomorrow in that most beautiful perfect summer, that someday forever summer, together.

**PAT O'DONNELL** Posted on June 20, 2019 <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/blog/summer-2/>



### The Little Ship

I stood watching as the little ship sailed out to sea. The setting sun tinted his white sails with a golden light, and as he disappeared from sight a voice at my side whispered, "He is gone."

But the sea was a narrow one. On the farther shore a little band of friends had gathered to watch and wait in happy expectation. Suddenly they caught sight of the tiny sail and, at the very moment when my companion had whispered, "He is gone," a glad shout went up in joyous welcome, "Here he comes!"

~**D.H. Lawrence**

*I miss you always and every day*

*But when I search my heart for you*

*I find that you never went away*

~**Terri Guillemets**

### A Love Song

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes. But it never fails to bring music to my ears.

If you are really my friend, please, don't keep me from hearing the beautiful music of his name. It soothes my broken heart and fills my soul with love.

~*Nancy Williams, TCF New Jersey*



In Loving Memory Of  
Bridget  
1977 - 2006

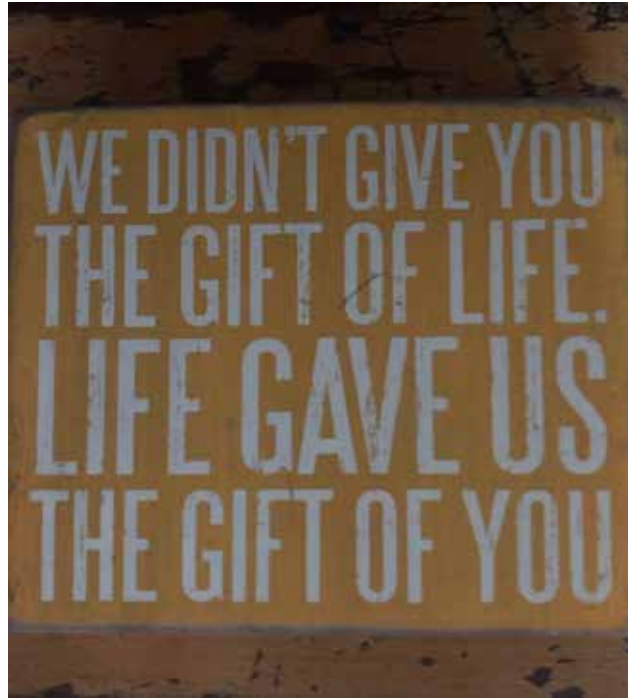
"Once Upon A Time" is a saying that I always thought had a special meaning to each person. The days, weeks, months and years since the fatal car accident, I think of what it means to me now. Two parents, two brothers, two daughters, four grandchildren, two great grandsons and one Maxwell. I had all of that "Once Upon A Time!"

A person can always remember the past but you can't live there because what's past is over and can never be again except in memories. So sad.

Love & Miss You, Mom

In Memory of  
**Jonathan**  
1983 - 2017

Wedding anniversary - June 1



Love, Mom & Dad



*If possible, please email poems / remembrances for the newsletter to [editor@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:editor@tcfpittsburgh.org)*

*Thank you!*

***Our time on earth is a school. Grief is the toughest class we have to take.***

***~Author Unknown***

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 ♡



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**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 2020 newsletter must be received by September 1, 2020.**

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  
P.O. Box 15495  
Pittsburgh, PA 15237  
Return Service Requested  
Permit No. 17**

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE  
**OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020**  
ALL LOVE GIFTS, ARTICLES AND SPEAKERS  
WILL BE DUE **BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2020**

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*Please respect the confidentiality of this newsletter.  
If disposing of it, please shred.*

**NEWSLETTER STAFF:**

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*Editor*  
Linda Bloom

If you'd like to receive this  
newsletter via email, please  
contact [editor@tcfpittsburgh.org](mailto:editor@tcfpittsburgh.org)

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## *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.

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

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**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