



The Compassionate Friends

Pittsburgh Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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March/April/May Spring Issue 2017

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
email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

PITTSBURGH PA CHAPTER

P.O. Box 15495
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
Phone: 412-835-1105
Website: www.tcfpittsburgh.org

PITTSBURGH CHAPTER CO-LEADERS

Pauline Sambol: 412-585-0787
chapter.leader@tcfpittsburgh.org
Megan Talbot: 814-860-4732
co-leader@tcfpittsburgh.org

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

John Taylor:
304-280-4389
taylorjohna@yahoo.com

United Way #2647



Spring 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 AT 1:30 P.M. TO SIGN IN.

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

**Sunday,
March 26, 2017**

Our speaker will be
Sue Wesner, MSN
facilitator of the support
group **Survivors of Suicide
(SOS)**, at Western
Psychiatric Institute & Clinic.

The
Special Sharing
will be on *suicide*

Regular Sharings

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,
April 23, 2017**

Our speaker will be
Fran Campbell, Certified
Addictions Counselor, who
will speak about **Grief and
Addictions**.

The
Special Sharing
will be on
overdose and addictions

Regular Sharings

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,
May 28, 2017**

Our program will be
**Loss and Grief:
Hope, Healing and
Reconnections**,
with TCF-Pittsburgh
Chapter Program Director,
Lillian Meyers, Ph.D.

The
Special Sharing
will be *creating memory
boxes*
Regular Sharings

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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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 Rt. 22/30, exit onto South I-79. Exit #55 (Kirwan Heights/Heidelberg). Get into left lane immediately turn left at first red light onto Vanadium Road. Go about 1.5 miles, turn left onto Bower Hill Road - 7 red lights or 2.5 miles turn left onto Moffett St. Church is on the right.

TCF Pittsburgh Chapter notes

- **Emailing of newsletters:** If you would like to start receiving this newsletter by email instead of postal mail, please send an email request to editor@tcfpittsburgh.org. Receiving the newsletter by email will help cut down on the use of paper, as well as decrease our printing and mailing costs!
- **Newsletter changes or errors:** Please remember to inform us of any changes to/errors in your mailing address, including any changes regarding the name(s) to whom the newsletter is sent. You can either call our main phone number (412-835-1105) or email us at editor@tcfpittsburgh.org to let us know if something needs to be corrected. Also, please let us know of any errors or omissions in the listing of your loved ones' names on the remembrance pages (birthdays and anniversaries). If you don't see your loved one's name on these pages during the months of their birthday and anniversary, and would like to have it added, please call or email to let us know.
- **Lending library:** The books in our library have recently been catalogued, and a new system of tracking borrowed books may be incorporated in the near future. If you have borrowed any books from our library, please remember to return them once you have finished reading them. This will give other TCF members a chance to read and benefit from them as well. Thank you!

Thank You...

To one of our dedicated volunteers, Betty R., who recently decided to "resign" from volunteering after many years of commitment to TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter. Betty joined TCF after her daughter passed away in 1988. Betty, one of our chapter's longest-serving volunteers, has been involved in many of the functions that help our chapter run smoothly. Most recently, she served as our Office Administrator, answering phone messages, mailing out introductory packets to bereaved families, keeping track of our membership, and providing relevant handouts for our monthly meetings and informational packets. She has served as a co-leader and group facilitator at the monthly meetings and led special sharing sessions regarding suicide. Betty could also be found at our monthly meetings at the information table, selling TCF wrist bands and butterfly pins and being available to provide additional information and support to our members.

Without her help over the years, our chapter wouldn't be where it is today. We have been better able to support so many grieving parents, siblings, and grandparents thanks to Betty's selfless commitment of time and energy to our chapter. Her contributions to TCF have helped our chapter keep going and growing!

Thank you, Betty!
**We greatly appreciate
 everything you have done for us!**

Upcoming Conferences

TCF Crawford County Chapter - "Memories - Treasures of the Heart"

TCF Crawford County is hosting the 11th Western Pennsylvania Regional TCF Conference on **March 31 - April 1, 2017** at the Days Inn in Meadville, PA. The conference will feature keynote speakers; sharing sessions and workshops; picture boards, where attendees can post photos of their loved ones; and a butterfly table with a variety of butterfly items available for purchase.

The registration fee of \$50.00/person includes all materials, entrance to all workshops, sharing sessions, refreshments at break time and a buffet luncheon. Anyone wishing a picture button of their loved one may send an additional \$3.00 and a phone with their registration. The button will be included in your registration packet.

For more information or to request a brochure and/or registration form, contact Ralph McClay at (814) 333-9299 or rcorvette@zoominternet.net. Registration forms are due by **March 10, 2017**. Copies of the brochure and registration form will be available at our February monthly meeting (2/26/17).

SAVE THE DATES! THE 40TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE



The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that Orlando, Florida, will be the site of the 40th TCF National Conference on July 28-30, 2017. "Rays of Sunshine, Oceans of Hope" is the theme of this event, which promises more of last year's great National Conference experience. The 2017 Conference

will be held at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. Updates will be provided on the national website (www.compassionatefriends.org) as well as on the TCF/USA Facebook Page and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.



A Mother's Love

A mother's love for her child may begin
with the very dream of becoming a mother...
A mother's love for her child may begin
with the thought of maybe expecting the news...
A mother's love for her child may begin
with the verification of her expectations...
A mother's love for her child may begin
with the affirmation that the child lives within her...
A mother's love for her child may begin
with her first sight of the new life that
she has delivered into the world...
A mother's love for her child may begin...
But it may never end...
Not even death can steal away
a mother's love for her child
A mother's love for her child knows no end!

*Diana M. Rohrbaugh
TCF Anne Arundel County, MD*



The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding trees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter. It was a magical time of year.

When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows of the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road.

That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding, and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing. And then . . .

IT happened. Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically—my world, my spring, my life changed. My 5-year-old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8-year-old sister, Stephanie, my firstborn, died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world. The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with "spring." If H.G. Well's time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn't fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn't go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that Spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

*Pat Loder, TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI
Reprinted from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of
The Compassionate Friends.*



But Your Son WANTED to Die – Mine Didn't

I cringed as once again I heard this remark, repeated so often since Warren took his life 3½ years ago. Even now, when I thought I had steeled myself to the harsh meaning of the words, they still left me hurt and demolished. Is it all that simple? Could anyone 'feeling good' just choose to die like that . . . if they knew the pain and suffering that then engulfs their surviving family?

How can I explain why he died when I do not really know myself? How can I make anyone understand his emotional pain, increasingly obvious to us, so skillfully masked from others? Our son was so handsome, intelligent and sensitive. It is still incredible that he shot himself one morning after returning from the hospital 'cured' of his terrible depression. Our beautiful first-born baby grew into a perfect son, but somewhere, somehow, our masterpiece had a flaw as cruel and as tenacious as any disease that strikes any other young person.

So, until research proves otherwise, we have to go along with the words of Professor Erwin Ringel that "SUICIDE CANNOT REALLY BE CHOSEN – since an intense and overwhelming inner compulsion renders any free choice null and void."

Our loss is as great as any other parent. We grieve just as deeply. Remember this and do not judge, we beg. We, and all the Survivors of Suicide suffer too much already from a horrendous tragedy that can, and does, happen to anyone.

Our Kids Loved Us – And We Love Them!

*Maureen Hargreaves
TCF Melbourne, Australia
In Memory of my son, Warren*



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 his 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 certificate, 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*

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 SO THAT WE CAN BE SURE IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED IN THE APPROPRIATE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER.

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

- BB, IN MEMORY OF HER SON, NB
- CB, IN MEMORY OF HER SISTER, TD
- LB & JB, IN MEMORY OF THEIR SON & BROTHER, MB
- QC & MD, IN MEMORY OF THEIR SON, PWC
- LD, IN MEMORY OF HER DAUGHTER, DLD, & GRANDSON, DLD
- SD, IN MEMORY OF HER SISTER, JE
- MG, IN MEMORY OF HER DAUGHTER, ABG
- TH & MH, IN MEMORY OF THEIR DAUGHTER, AH
- BH, IN MEMORY OF HER SON, JH
- GK & JK, IN MEMORY OF THEIR SON, JK
- SL & JL, IN MEMORY OF THEIR SON, DL
- TM, IN MEMORY OF HER DAUGHTER, BMM
- MM, IN MEMORY OF HER GRANDDAUGHTER, CB
- VP, IN MEMORY OF HER SON, JP
- MR & TR, IN MEMORY OF THEIR DAUGHTER, KR
- DS & PS, IN MEMORY OF THEIR DAUGHTER, KCS
- GS & RMS, IN MEMORY OF THEIR DAUGHTER, RS
- BT & LT, IN MEMORY OF THEIR SON, JT
- JU, IN MEMORY OF HIS SON, JCU

DONATIONS IN HONOR OF LM'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

- | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|
| RB & BB | BH | PM |
| KC & JC | HK & NJK | PS |
| MD | KK & DK | LS & JS |
| DD & SD | EL | MS |
| JD & AD | RL | GS & RMS |
| WE & ME | JM & GM | RT & LT |
| SG | | RW & JW |

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 **JUNE/JULY/AUGUST 2017** newsletter must be received by **May 1, 2017**.

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
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Next issue will be
JUNE/JULY/AUGUST 2017
All love gifts, articles and speakers
will be due by May 1, 2017

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If disposing of it, please shred.

NEWSLETTER STAFF:

Susanna Zawacki
Editor

Linda Bloom
Charlotte Hutchinson

*To receive this newsletter
via email, contact
editor@tcfpittsburgh.org*



The Compassionate Friends Credo
©2007



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 TCF, 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