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# The Compassionate Friends TCF of POTOMAC , MD

TCF meets the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM  
Potomac Presbyterian Church  
10301 River Road  
Potomac, MD 20854  
TCFPotomacMD.com

Fall 2011

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<b>Co-Leaders</b>	<b>Nancy Frank</b>
	<b>Mary Mandeville</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>George Beall</b>
<b>New Members</b>	<b>Barbara Beall</b>
<b>Remembrances</b>	<b>Mary Nader</b>
<b>Librarian</b>	<b>Lynn Lee</b>
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>Susan Johnson</b>
<b>Hospitality</b>	<b>JoAnn Gelman</b>
<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Katherine Bloom</b>
<b>Google Group Manager</b>	<b>Barry Gordon</b>
<b>Member at Large</b>	<b>Rob Goor</b>

The Compassionate Friends Mission

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a national, self help organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families, who have experienced the death of a child or sibling. TCF members provide information and support . Volunteers run the more than 600 local chapters in the U. S. and TCF has chapters in many other countries.

The Compassionate Friends:  
P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60255-3696  
National Website:  
[WWW.Compassionatefriends.org](http://WWW.Compassionatefriends.org)



We are like butterflies who flutter for a day and think it is forever  
-Carl Sagan

## Letter from the Editor

This past summer was one to remember. We survived an earthquake and a hurricane! Yet for some of us, the storm in our hearts still whirls around relentlessly. Some of us went to the National TCF Conference in Minneapolis, some went to the beach, and some tried new things to challenge ourselves. Now, as autumn approaches, we are faced with another round of challenges. The **Holidays**. Many of our group have been through one, five or ten or more. Some of us, however, are facing their first Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, or Kwanzaa without their beloved child. It makes no difference how old one's child was when he or she died, or in what manner. The Holidays come with lost expectation and an empty chair at the table. Each of us must decide for ourselves and families how we deal with these family oriented events. We know they are coming, and will continue year after year.

What works the first year or two may not be appropriate five years later. One thing I would recommend, as many will offer their advice, be good to yourself and true to your feelings. No one can tell you how to act, what to feel, what to eat, whether to celebrate at home or flee to some new hiding place. Some of us will turn to their faith, some to family and others to their friends, and for some lucky ones, they have all three. I am still working my way through these days. My son's 25th birthday is on Halloween. Memories of Kira and Adam Trick or Treating together flood my mind, and I still remember the first time Adam went out with Kira on his third birthday. She proudly announced at every house that he was celebrating his birthday. Adam was given double treats each time. Back home when they grew weary of carrying their candy loot, Adam generously gave Kira much of his candy as a way to thank her for telling everyone. Of course, I promptly confiscated almost all the chocolate! We all have our own precious memories and the Holidays are a good time to reflect on happier days, even if it's through some tears.

## As We Near the Special Season

As we near the special season that stirs up feelings of heritage, patriotism, thanksgiving, and our relationship with God, we are instantly reminded it doesn't seem to fit together for us; our personal sense of well-being is suffering. Our hearts and spirits are undergoing the trauma of painfully fresh grief that refuses to heal or restore comfort to their lives. This season reminds me we are living with extra stress that must be resolved. I offer a few thoughts to each of you, along with my love, in hope that feelings of peace and purpose will return to bring you comfort.

**First**, be careful in agreeing to take on the traditional extra work that goes with the holidays. You are coping with grief that will take much of your usable energy.

**Second**, be especially kind and patient with yourself. The need for physiological rest is vital at this time; regular sleep and rest hours will help.

**Third**, be aware that holidays and alcohol have become traditional companions; extra caution may be necessary to prevent the depressant effects of alcohol from further aggravating your grief anxiety.

**Fourth**, it's okay to change past practices that are especially painful reminders of what can be no more.; do something different if you have to.

**Finally**, allow yourself private time as you need to, but also remember it's important to allow others to try to ring you comfort and give you extra help during the holidays. Loved ones need feedback that says: - I'm trying to recover, and I appreciate your help.

**Ann Frost, TCF Middle Georgia Chapter**





## The Compassionate Friends 32<sup>nd</sup> National Conference

This past July I attended my 5<sup>th</sup> National TCF Conference in Minneapolis, MN. This conference was wonderful and filled me with energy, laughter, tears, and most of all, love from both new and old friends who are now who I consider to be my family. I have found over the years that these conferences serve as what I call a Family Reunion where everyone there knows and feels your pain and the energy is contagious. I literally felt the love everyone has for their children just exploding with love for everyone there.

The theme of the conference, Shining Stars, Guiding Hope, truly lived up to its name with the speakers, workshops, sharing sessions and the general feeling of welcome to “their neck of the woods”. The workshops were outstanding, and luckily several of the popular ones were repeated in the second day. I especially found my best one ever to be the one titled “Who Am I?”, very enlightening and very special as so many shared who they were, who they are now, and for many who are 10 or more years out, who they have been each year since losing their child. It was amazing how well everyone connected and shared their thoughts and advice to each other.

The opening speaker Mitch Carmody kicked off the event with a feeling of love and care for our children. We felt it not only from his opening remarks but his song. We all stood up together and joined him with sign language. The other speakers included Carol Kearns, who lost her daughter

when she was swept away by a rogue wave and now speaks all over the country about “grief therapy”. Our dinner speaker, David Morrell, who is a famous author, known especially for his award winning novel First Book the novel which the movie Rambo was based upon. Of course after being impressed initially with his fame and fortune, it was quickly diminished as it meant nothing to him if he could only have his son back. He filled our hearts with pain as he spoke of the very rare and painful cancer his son died from, only to relieve the 22 years later from a grandparents view as his granddaughter died from the same cancer. He was remarkable sharing his pain twice and yet his strength to find a way to continue and offering encouragement to each of us. Following his speech was the candle lighting ceremony for which there are no words to express the feelings of each parent holding a candle together in unison for our most loved children. The Remembrance Walk and closing speaker continued to bring us together as one most loving family. Our closing speaker, Mary Westra, spoke of the positive feeling she now has for others years after finding hope after her son was brutally murdered at a Bachelor Party of his friend.

It was a most amazing way to end our conference.

If I had to summarize my experience at this conference, it would be energized. I would also use words, such as fun, exciting, exhilarating and joyous. I, of course, shed many tears, not just for myself and Danny, but for all the other parents and siblings I have come to know and love even more at each conference. It is such a wonderful feeling to be with so many people facing the same pain

and all joined together for 3 days and nights to share their love for their children with one another. I think I get energized simply because I feel we all have to much love for our children trapped in our bodies and this is one time where we are able to release it, and we all benefit as during this weekend I really feel the love for our children and from our children.

Well, the only words I can say now are “California here I Come” July 2012. I am already looking forward to my annual vacation, as I have been every year since the one year date of losing Danny. I love these conferences and am already getting excited, for I also call it my Family Reunion where I meet new and old friends, and most of all I can bring Danny's life back, and learn about so many other children who left this life far too early, and who will never be forgotten ever. Oh, and just knowing I have even more to look forward to next year, I am also thinking ahead to 2013 to the conference in Boston.

**Nancy Frank**

## **Healing versus Recovery**

I have heard the term “recovery” and “healing” used interchangeable to refer to the goal of processing grief. I would like to propose the idea that recovery carries with it the assumption of an injury or illness and when the necessary repair has taken place, the person will return basically to the same he was previous to the injury or illness..

When a child dies, there is, indeed, an injury of massive proportions. All systems – physical, mental and spiritual are affected. There is physical pain, emotional retching, spiritual upheaval, and struggling. All this may be occurring simultaneously. Though there may not be bleeding in the physical sense, there is emotional hemorrhaging. The body and psyche are in crisis. Bereaved parents are often unable to eat, they may experience sleep disturbances and disorientation. Believe it or not, all these reactions are normal. Grief is a normal part of life. This is not a mental illness or some chemical imbalance of the brain. What is not normal is to experience the death of a

child. The major difference between recovery and healing is the goal is not to return to who we were before our child died. That goal is impossible to achieve. To continue to try to achieve a goal of recovery is to assume that life will be basically the same with a few minor adjustments. We'll set one less place at the table, buy less food, and feel sad on holiday and cry a bit more. Our lives have been permanently and irrevocably changed, but that we are, in fact, becoming different people. The becoming is the healing.

During this process, we examine every facet of our lives and our belief systems. This is a journey, not a “repair.” By living through this journey, we become different people. True, we may basically look the same, but we are not the same as before our child died. We look at life in a new way. Our interests change and our priorities change. We will never look at a child the same way again. We will have a new and deeper level of understanding and compassion for those experiencing pain - all kinds of pain. We have a different understanding of spirituality. We ourselves feel new and different. We carry some of the old person with us through the healing process but we emerge different. We are healed, not recovered.

Birdie Tracey, TCF Shoreline Chapter, CT

## **A New Normal**

My life has a new normal. Actually, I don't even know what NORMAL is, other than “just a word” making me think of typical, usual, everyday, etc. Do I dare go on? Do I WANT to go on?

Life changed abruptly the morning of Friday, June 20, 2008. My beautiful 30 year old daughter, Crystal, died of a ruptured aortic dissection. What is that – the lining of the aorta peels loose inside and as the blood pumps through, the tear becomes bigger and bigger, closing off the artery, which then bursts. At least that is what I'd been told. She had never complained of chest pains or trouble breathing. All it really means is MY DAUGHTER IS GONE.

Like it or not, I have had to learn to “go on”. I have learned to keep my daughter in my heart, and to go about the business of life, or raising our 13 year old granddaughter as she learns to live without her mother. Sometimes learning sucks. We'd prefer to NOT learn this lesson, we'd prefer to fail this test and have her back in our lives every day.

However, that is not the learning plan for our family. So, we do the daily homework of life ~ living. My husband and I are not just Faith's grandparents, we are parenting her. We'd finished parenting when our youngest left for college 12 years ago; until June 2008. We've had to learn to have a new role in Faith's life, while maintaining the grandparent role with our other two granddaughters., Kat (15) and Gracie (6) They have had to learn we still love them just as much as Faith; but our role with Faith has changed. I have also had to learn it is ok to not feel guilty

about all the “extras” we do for Faith in the role of parenting AND to still do grand-parenting things with all three granddaughters.

Life is full of learning moments. And I have learned this is my new normal, life will never return to the old path because my daughter cannot return. S, we learn to like, if not love, our new normal.



**Debbie Thornton**

## BOOK REVIEW

*A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor*  
Robert Baugher and Marc Calija (1998)

Robert Baugher is a “certified death educator” and suicide intervention trainer. As a psychologist, he worked with bereaved parents, children and adults, widows and widowers, cancer patients and their families. Marc Calija, a former student of Baugher, suggested that they write a guide for coping with grief.

The authors' goal is to inform readers about the reactions that they may face after the death of a loved one. They state they will not stop out pain, but they can help us become aware of the effects of a profound loss. The material is presented in an easy to read format because the authors recognize that many of us who are experiencing grief cannot concentrate on a book or article. As you open the book the left side page discusses in a bullet-point list some of the reactions we might have, and the right side page has a set of suggestions to help deal with the grief reactions.

Grief reactions include emotional, physical, reactions to others, reactions that demand thinking

(actually, this is a more philosophical section-- why did this happen to me?-- and contains dreams,

presence, belief and rituals) It continues with unique grief reactions including accidents, murder and suicide. The last discussion is entitled “How Do I Know When I'm Getting Better?” That was the hook for me.

The book can be read in any order depending on how you are feeling. You may not feel like taking a peek at a book, which was my reaction, but I figured that since each emotion listed in the table of contents, such as shock or guilt or hyperactivity (among other emotions discussed) pertained to something I in fact did feel, I thought it was worth giving the small book a quick look.

While I still have no answers as to when do I know I am getting better, I do go back to the book regularly and have a good cry.



**\*\*\*\*\*SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS\*\*\*\*\***

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony



December 6, 2011

7:00 PM

Potomac Compassionate Friends

Most of us who have lost a child or sibling find the “Holiday Season” emotionally difficult because of the memories of better times when our loved ones were with us. With the goings on over the Holidays with people celebrating, we are still grieving our lost child or sibling.

To help us through this time, the Potomac Chapter has planned a “Candle Lighting” ceremony to be held the evening of December 6, our regular meeting night. Family members, grandparents, siblings are invited to attend, as well as special friends who have helped you in your loss. Please see the invitation emailed, and note our special speaker will be Ms. Katherine Collins, TCF DC and VA Regional Coordinator, who, with her husband, Chuck, directed the 2010 TCF National Conference in Arlington.

Please send your reservations and payment of \$10.00 per person to :  
The Compassionate Friends, c/o George Beall, Treasurer  
798 Kimberly Court E., Gaithersburg, MD 20878  
Telephone: 301-253-8740 if you have any questions.

### *The Google Group*

As many of you know by now, Barry Gordon has started a Google email group. Many of us are already writing to one another, and Barry invites everyone in our chapter to participate. Many of the emails recount very intimate feelings about our loved and lost children. The responding emails offer insight and comfort. The email address, in case some have not received it is:

[Compassionate-Friends-Potomac@googlegroups.com](mailto:Compassionate-Friends-Potomac@googlegroups.com).

We all thank Barry for undertaking this challenge and encouraging us to share our thoughts during the days when the Group does not meet.

## Sibling Support Group Update

The group is held at Hospice Caring, It is private and non profit. Hospice Caring trains and provides volunteers to help hospice patients and provides bereavement support groups.

Bereavement Care – Provides bereavement counseling, support groups and workshop for hospice families and members of the Montgomery County community.  
This program offers help to young adults who have lost a sibling.

*Linda Tebelman, LCSW*  
Director of Bereavement Care  
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1355 Piccard Drive, Suite 100, Rockville, MD 20850  
Phone: (301) 921 4400  
Fax: (301) 921 4433  
[www.montgomeryhospice.org](http://www.montgomeryhospice.org)  
Montgomery Hospice | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MontgomeryHospice](https://www.facebook.com/MontgomeryHospice)

Our mission is to gentle the journey through serious illness and loss with skill and compassion

## Newsletter Contributions

The Potomac Chapter wants to hear from each of you, to share your ideas and feelings. To hear about what works for you in handling your grief, and what doesn't. What helps you cope, and how you deal with new situations.

Please send articles, stories, poems, or quotes for the next newsletter to Katherine Bloom @ [Katherinx@aol.com](mailto:Katherinx@aol.com).

Please forgive any misspelled names or typos

# LOVE GIFTS

Katherine Bloom for Kira

Mary Nader for Carolyn

Barbara & Barry Gordon for Jonathan Blank

Susan & Carl Johnson for Michael

Barbara Tatge for Alexander Finamore

Rita & Walter Pancik for Bruce Liebowitz

Mary Mandeville for Kenny

Nancy & Brian Pinto for Claire

Ellen Lee for Steve

Tereston Bertrand for T. J.

Charles Pacholkiw for Chuck



## Love Gift Giving

The Compassionate Friends is a self supporting, non-profit organization solely dependent on LOVE GIFTS and other donations for operating expenses of all TCF chapters. If you would like to send a LOVE GIFT in memory of your child or any other loved one, or in honor of any occasion, it would be greatly appreciated. **Love Gifts are fully Tax Deductible.** There is a basket at monthly meetings with Love Gift envelopes or

You may mail Love Gifts to:

George Beall  
798 Kimberly Court E  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Gifts received by the monthly meeting deadline will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.

# Our Children Remembered



## August 2011

Lisa Polack & Bruce Alexander

Codi

Barbara & George Beall

Barbara

Janet & William Frank

Alexander

Kelly Heller

Margaret (Hernandez)

Denise Hyman

Alex

Susan & Carl Johnson

Michael

Vivian Kim

Susanna

Mary Mandeville

Kenneth

Melody & Ray Manning

Bryce

Margaret & John McGovern

Patrick

Laurie Dove & Jack Purdum

Matthew

Nathalie Silver

Celine

Charlotte Taylor

Michael (Moyer)

## September 2011

Joan Frank & John Bantell	Jenna
Sandra & Lionel Chaiken	Pamela Sue
Mariana & Craig Duncan	Nicholas (Tate)
Cyndie & Jim Glass	Jeremy
Cindy Houde	Tyler
Maggie & Ray Jones	Ryan
Neyda Gonzalez & Maurice Lewis	Maurice Jr.
Rita & Walter Pancik	Bruce (Liebowitz)
Mrs & Shih Cheng Pao	Kevin
Christine Williams & John Rother	Natthaniel
Kenneth Rowe	Nicole

## October 2011

Halley Dunne & Pat Daley	Jacob (Dunne)
Patricia DeSimone	Michael (McIhaine)
Jane & Ilya Furman	Caroline
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel	Gerald III
Carol Cohen & Julian Seidel	Jennifer

## November 2011

**Cheryl & Bob Evans**

**John**

**JoAnn Gellman**

**Julia**

**Peggy & Ainsley Gordon Jr**

**Ainsley III**

**Beth Hillard**

**Jeannette**

**Micki & Irvin Koniak**

**Leslie K. Garelick**

**Janet & Charles Pacholkin**

**Charles**

**Theresa & Steve Spencer**

**Lucas(Luke)**

**Joan Uhlie**

**Jason**

**Margaret & Philip Waclawick**

**Carl**

**Joece & Matt Yuen**

**Michael**