


The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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
WWW.TCFPotomacMD.com

Fall 2014

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 660 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

**Leader
Co-Leaders**

**Katherine Bloom
Nancy Frank
Mary Mandeville**

**Treasurer
Remembrances
Google Group Manager**

**George Beall
Mary Nader
Barry Gordon**

**Outreach
Hospitality
Newsletter
New Members
Librarian
Members at Large**

**Mitzi Sereno
JoAnn Gelman
Katherine Bloom
Barbara Beall
Lilyan Heupel
Rob Goor
Barbara Gordon**



Ordinary riches can be stolen, real riches cannot. In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken from you.

Oscar Wilde

Letter from the Editor

I started writing this column several times, not sure what I topic I wanted to address, as there have several different issues which seemed, to me, to need attention. So, I've decided to include all of what I believe may be of interest to the group.

First and foremost, was the sudden death of a world famous and beloved individual by suicide, Robin Williams. His death seemed to catch everyone by surprise. Here was a man with incredible talents as an actor and comedian, a much loved family man, a philanthropist, and cherished friend of many. A man such as Robin Williams, who had many resources open to him, yet must have felt so hopeless, he could not see a better tomorrow, and made a tragic choice. It left me wondering what chance do so many others have with limited resources and support have when faced with seemingly unimaginable difficulties and losses. Often, we don't ever know the final trigger or thoughts when a person completes a suicide. What we do know, for those left behind, is there are endless questions, feelings of guilt and a sorrow which will always last. Some of us have lost a loved one to suicide, and even in our own chapter, we lost a member in this way. I wanted to write about suicide as I know many of us who have lost a child often wish for our pain to go away, with suicide as an option. **There are other choices.** Talking about your loss, with a spouse, a friend, a grief counselor, a clergy person, or coming to TCF meetings can be the road to learning to cope. The newly bereaved can be especially vulnerable, though even a few years after the death of a child, when reality has sunk in, suicidal thoughts somehow creep into our consciousness. If they do, reach out to someone right away. [The National Suicide Prevention Hotline# is 1-800-273-8255, available 24 hours a day, every day.](tel:1-800-273-8255) If someone in your family talks about suicide, take them seriously and let them know about the many support systems available. Bereaved families can be at risk, either a parent or a sibling, and there is no shame in acknowledging this.

I've heard many speakers, even at National Conferences, say they had these thoughts, but reached out, and deep within themselves, and made a conscious decision to work through their emotional pain and continue their journey of life. Again, there is no shame in thinking about suicide,

but if you feel this is the answer, please think again, know there is hope, and even joys, to be found, even after the loss of a child. Often, we are really just wishing we could disappear, to make our pain of loss lessen, so remember to be mindful of these thoughts, you are not alone in them, and, not to be flippant, but as Scarlett O'Hara said, "Tomorrow is another day" and it just may be the day someone reaches out to you with love and understanding.

The second thing I wanted to share with everyone was my experience at the Chicago National Conference. This was my 3rd time at a conference and, once again, it was an intense and wonderful experience. Alan Peterson gave an absolutely fantastic opening to the Conference and gave everyone a reason to share a tear and a smile. He spoke, he sang and made everyone feel welcome and filled with anticipation as to what the conference would offer. The conference did not disappoint. This year's speakers were inspirational and there was a lovely memorial dedication for Darcy Sims, by her husband and daughter. I was honored to be asked to participate as a panelist at one workshop, "Daughterless Mothers" and facilitate 2 sharing sessions, one on "Loss of an Adopted Child" and one on "Loss from an Eating Disorder (the first time this issue has been addressed at a conference). The other workshops I attended were most helpful to me in my own grief journey. It was also a time to see old friends and make new ones, knowing we are all there for the same reason and no masks are needed. We had a few members from the chapter attend, and I hope even more will be able to go to Dallas next July.

Thirdly, last month, Montgomery Hospice offered a day long workshop, "The Practice of Presence: Using Compassion Based Practices in Loss and Grief". Lilyan Heupel, Rob Goor and I attended. While it was geared to Hospice workers and other grief professionals, we found the workshop interesting, at times challenging, and overall a most worthwhile event. The speakers kept our attention and provided a window into seeing how different aspects of grief and grievers are managed.

Last, but not least, I want to welcome new members, thank our ongoing members, and invite everyone to take an active role in running the chapter. Our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony is December 2nd. We welcome anyone would like to help volunteer the night of ceremony.



37th National Conference
Chicago, Illinois
July 11-13, 2014

Miles of Compassion through Winds of Hope

by Debbie Thornton

The 37th annual TCF Conference was held in Chicago, IL July 11-13, 2014. The conference begins with registration on Thursday night along with a few specific "meet and Greet" sessions (for instance, for the Sibling Group). Friday morning the conference really gets off the ground with a keynote speaker, followed by a number of workshops. There are several keynote speakers at prime time throughout the conference, as well as entertainment.

The workshops are a HUGE reason to go to the conference. It does not matter if you are in very new grief or have been on the grief journey for many years, there are workshops for you! The age of your child or the tragedy that took your child - there are workshops just for you.

In our case, on June 20th, 2008, our beautiful 30 year old daughter died in the hospital where she was being treated for kidney stones. She actually died of a ruptured aorta. She had never complained of chest pains or shortness of breathing, so it hit all of us (including her 10 year old daughter) like a ton of bricks. I truly believe that every parent has that same ton of bricks fall on them at the moment they lost their child.

There are workshops covering all causes of death: miscarriage, SIDS, vehicular and non-vehicular, murder, suicide, drug related, long term illness, etc. Also, new grief (any time less than 2 years) has workshops, as well as 5 years or more. Even if your loss was years ago and you didn't grieve until now, that is new grief.

Some of the workshops my husband, Daryl, attended were: "For Men Only", which had a panel of 5 men discussing and answering questions about male grief: "Creating/Preserving a Digital Memory Archive of your Child", covering various ways to save memories electronically: "Exploring Grief through Photography", shared how to organize photographs to tell a story: "People Say the Darndest Things", is something we all run into because they just don't know any better: "Bereaved Parents 5 Years Later", was about how the grief process changes over the years.

I went to a workshop "For Women Only" which was most interesting. It was a panel of 5 men answering questions we women have about male grief. People express their grief differently and it is also different between men and women. "Am I Crazy, or Am I Grieving?" This session covered the secondary losses we experience because of losing a child. For instance, have you experienced memory loss, loss of friends, self esteem, sexual desire, interest in your hobbies? The list is almost endless, but you get the idea.

"Transformation Through the Years, How We Grieved, How We Healed", "The Bereaved Parent Issue involving Surviving Grandchildren". The titles are pretty self explanatory. However, there were two sides to the session regarding grandchildren. There were a couple of us who are raising our grandchild(ren) now that the parent (our child) is gone. On the flip side, were the grandparents who are not allowed to see their grandchildren, and are in legal situations to fight for visitation. Again, here is a secondary loss. "Whispers of Love" with Mitch Carmody covered the numerous ways we may get a sign from our child. The sign is a personal connection between you and your child, for example: butterflies, rainbows, a 'touch', etc. There are sessions for siblings, and they have special activities they can participate in. The siblings also had put together a skit for the parents during the Closing Ceremony. Sibs have their own way of grieving, and they are able to share their grief and healing during the conference.

Some other highlights include the Butterfly Boutique, the Book Store, a silent auction, plus sharing sessions in the evenings. I can't remember the titles of the sharing sessions, but they often were smaller groups discussing

My Grief

By Craig Spirka

My grief had been asleep, and was dreaming. In that dream, my grief was crying, and crying out. And when the dream passed, I sat with my grief and we remembered the time my new family and I vacationed in the Outer Banks. We recalled how Lesley joined that beach vacation in progress, by taking the train from New York

some of the workshop topics.

Saturday is a special banquet, keynote speaker, followed by a candle lighting ceremony. It is totally awesome to see 1200 + candles lighting up a darkened room. The unity, the unspoken understanding of grief, the lights of hope; all touch a special place in your heart.

Sunday morning is the annual "Walk to Remember" where we wear the name of our child and often other children's names as well. The walk is a mile or so, and hundreds of parents participate. Following the Walk is the Sunday keynote speaker and closing ceremony. In attending the Conference, I find a united front that I am not walking this journey of grief alone. There is strength in numbers and there are so many other parents who know she you have been. They know the broke heart that you are mending, that can 'send you off to a quiet place deep within' where you connect with your child. The Conference and the monthly TCF meetings gives us strength to carry on in our journey.

The 38th annual Conference will be July 10-12, 2015 in Dallas, Texas. **"Hope Shines Bright, Deep in the Heart"**. Mark your calendars and plan to attend! It is well worth it.

to Richmond, and me driving six hours to get her. I'd do it again in a heartbeat. Just to hug her at the train station, and to see her smile once more, in pig-tails, at the beach.

****** SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT ******

The November 2014 meeting will include a **"For Men Only Group"**. We know men and women grieve differently and couples are often not in the same grief place at the same time. This special group will give the men of our chapter the chance to talk about some things they may not feel comfortable talking about in front of their partners.

****** REMINDER ******

Candle Lighting

**The Potomac Chapter Candle Lighting Ceremony
will be held on Tuesday, December 2nd 2014**

**The 18th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting
will be held on Sunday December 14th 2014**

The Sibling Group

The TCF Adult (18+) sibling group will be meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month. Our next meeting will be on Monday, October 13 at 6:30 pm, at Bagel City in Rockville. The address is: Bagel City, 12119 Rockville Pike, in the Pike Shopping Center (Twinbrook/Rockville area). Bagel City is open until 8:00 pm and serves sandwiches, wraps, soups, salads and burgers. We hope to see you there. Please join our closed Facebook page - MD/DC/VA Adult Sibling Loss Support Group - for further information. Contact Andrea Keller at andreakeller9@yahoo.com or 301-802-1855 - if you have any questions.

The Google Group

The Potomac Chapter has a Google Group which you may use at any time during the month.

It is especially useful when we are feeling alone between monthly meetings and need a virtual hug. This is a private group for only our Chapter where we can share intimate feelings about our loved ones and our loss. The Email address is:
Compassionate-Friends-Potomac@googlegroups.com

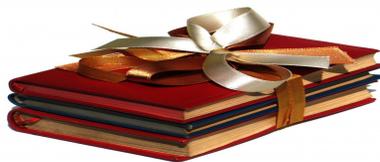
Newsletter Contributions

The Potomac Chapter wants to hear from each and all of you, sharing 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

Katherinx@aol.com

If your contribution is from an outside source, please provide their attribution.

Library



The Potomac Chapter has an extensive library which include books written by people who have lost a child or sibling. There are books of poetry, essays and variety of brochures. The books are free and available for 3 months at a time to our members. We also welcome contributions of relevant books. If you have any questions, you may contact Lilyan Heupel, our Chapter Librarian.

LOVE GIFTS

Robert Goor

Andrew

Craig Spirka

Lesley

Susan & Carl Johnson

Michael

Sandra Gabrielle

Gift



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 another loved one, or in honor of any occasion, it will be greatly appreciated. LOVE GIFTS are fully tax deductible. There is a basket at monthly meetings with LOVE GIFT envelopes. All donations must be in check form. You may also 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



JULY 2014

Phyliss Belzer
Allison Lucas & Phil Bloom
Ena Castro
Charlotte & Walter Cohen
Nancy Frank
JoAnn Gelman
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel
Mitzi & Ed Sereno
Diana winters

Alan
Mike
Deborah
Jason
Daniel
William (Will)
Robert (Robbie)
Andrea
John (Winters Crystal)

August 2014

Barbara & George Beall
Sharon Casey
Mary Mandeville
Nathalie Silver
Mary & Andrew Sumner

Barbara
John (Marsh)
Kenneth
Celine
Alicia

September 2014

Sandra & Lionel Chaiken
Cyndie & James Glass
Rita & Walter Pancik
Susan Smith

Pamela Sue
Jeremy
Bruce Liebowitz
Samuel

October 2014

Paul Ahern
Carolyn & Gerald Carroll
Halley & Pat Daley
Patricia DeSimone
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel
Susan Joseph

Mary Elizabeth (Beth Ryan)
Vincent
Jacob (Dunn)
Michael (McIhane)
Gerald III
Charles

