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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

Summer 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>Nancy Pinto</b>
<b>Hospitality</b>	<b>Susan Johnson</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 an international, 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)



**There comes a times when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful that  
the risk it took to blossom**

Anais Nin

## Letter from the Editor

It's summer once again, a time many people look forward to with anticipation all year. For bereaved parents and siblings, this can be a time of great conflict and ambivalence. Other people's kids out of school and vacation plans being made. Depending on where one is on the grief journey, this can be a painful time, one of reflection and one of renewal. Some of us cannot imagine having fun again, without the cloud of guilt hanging overhead. Some have surviving children and need to take care of their needs and wants. Each of us must make a personal decision, similar to what we do on Mother's and Father's Day, and other holidays. We cannot be rushed, prodded, or talked into doing something that is not comfortable for us. Whether it takes a few months or several years, there will hopefully come a time when we can plan a few days or weeks off away from our daily routine and refresh our souls. Some have vacationed with other bereaved parents, and some go alone. There are always new places to explore, or returns to a familiar place that will appeal to some. There is no One Size Fits All.

Some may try a new challenge, such as hiking in the mountains, and some may just need to sit at a pool or beach and get fresh air. We may even cry a little, and that's good, too. Feeling our deepest feelings is always part of the grief process and cleansing in its way. We don't forget our children when we have a good time. I think we honor their lives when we are able to find our way, step by step. This gives us the chance to remember them, talk about them, and tell their stories to new people. Our lost children live on through our memories and sharing them. I hope each of us finds a way to capture some of our former selves, before the losses, and find some joy this season.



## Summertime and the livin' is easy... The lazy, hazy days of summer...



What does summertime bring to your mind? I think of the beach with waves softly washing ashore. Walking along with the sand between my toes. Finding "treasure" along the shoreline. The sound of the ocean is calming. The sun is warm on my face. Life seems good.

And then I realize that being at the beach is forever changed for me. The memories of times past at the beach with my family come flooding back. Lots of good memories.

I stare at the ocean and think...the ocean is like my grief. Sometimes it seems wild and black with rage and almost impossible to manage. Riptides, currents and storm surges.

Sometimes it's lie rough waves hitting the shore, continually pounding. And sometimes the waves are smaller and are enjoyable to play in. then sometimes it is unusually calm and I can wade in and let the cool water surround me.

So now I go to the beach to remember. And let the sun warm my heart. Let the sound of the waves calm my soul. And get sand between my toes.

Carol Tomaszewski, Annapolis Chapter BP/USA

## ***Life at 120 MPH***

Twenty four times I've turned the pages of the calendar. Each time, it takes me further away from the life that belonged to my beloved Kira. I hate that this ritual is now part of my existence. It scares me to look back and feel time is passing by, time I should be with her, seeing her become the woman and mother she was meant to be. I yearn to be close to her. I go to her graveside to be close, knowing this is where she is in the most physical sense, though no longer the vibrant lovely girl I knew. I go to restaurants and order her favorite foods, in a desperate attempt to connect with her. I wear her jewelry, still.

I am not a religious person, believing in neither heaven nor hell. I do not believe in an afterlife. But is there a place where souls gather in death? Where would such a place be? Are the souls of our lost children the butterflies I see at the cemetery? Some people go to Mediums to trade messages with their child. Some have told me they are told the same essential thing... "I'm OK Mom, and now please let go of your guilt and pain. Have a full life for yourself". I'm sure Kira would want to say it to me. So what's left? Where could I go to be close to her spirit? Where on this Earth could I find the connection I so long for?

So, I went Skydiving! Yes, I did! My hope was I could feel a closeness in the vast openness of the sky. And for 36 seconds, at 120 miles an hour of free fall, I found what I went looking for. In my heart, I called out to Kira and hoped for a sense of peace and calm. I found it. There was, I confess, that momentary terror as I was flinging myself (with a Tandem Instructor) out of a plane almost 2 miles above Earth. Then Whoosh, I was out the door and nothing is holding you up, and nothing is holding you back. It was the pure freedom that made me feel so alive for the first time in 2 years. The pull of the ripcord brought me back to reality and we were gliding along above everything. Above the earth, above the people, and above the pain and loneliness. It was exhilarating and over too soon.

The preparation for the jump included a video during which they repeatedly advised skydiving is a dangerous sport and can result in death or serious

injury. Then a 10 + page waiver where in large bold font, they repeated, page by page, the dire warning. My own feelings were.. so what? No longer do I fear death, but it would be so inconvenient to break a leg and wear a hot cast in the sweltering Washington summer, with a wire hangar as my companion to scratch my itchy leg. No, death did not scare me, but then they tell you to remove all jewelry. Taking off the ring that was Kira's proved to be a challenge for me. Yet, I had my goal, and felt even without it, I would feel closer to Kira.

I'm thinking now a few days later, the jump was a life altering moment for me. One week later, I still find myself smiling for no reason. A few people who know my story commented I seem more animated and happy, more my old self. I feel it, too. So now, I face a new dilemma. How do I begin to let go of the grief and pain yet hold onto my sense of loss? Are they mutually exclusive? Now, two years into this bereavement journey, is there a semblance of life as I once knew it? Does one hold onto grief as some sort of odd badge of courage, or is letting go of it the greater strength? It may come to be that the euphoria of the sky dive will pass, and I will find myself back where I was on June 3rd. I guess my new challenge will be to decide what I learned about myself in a matter of seconds and how to infuse the knowledge into my future. I know I can bring back the feeling of unfettered joy of the jump, recall every moment of that awesome day at will. I do believe that when I chose to go beyond my comfort zone, chose to step out of the safety of the plane, I would come back to Terra Firma a changed person.

I think Kira would be proud of me, though I can imagine her rolling her eyes and shaking her head at the notion of her usually conservative mom even entertaining a jump, much less following through with it. So is that the key to the journey? Make a choice? Take baby steps at first with our grief, then a giant literal and figurative leap of faith towards life again? I don't yet, but I can say I feel more on track now, more in touch with myself, even if I cannot touch Kira. She will remain in my heart forever, even as I regain my personal sense of life and purpose. Oh, and by the way, I am going to go skydiving again, wanna come along?



## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS



Compassionate Friends national conferences have always been a great healing experience for bereaved families and TCF's 34<sup>th</sup> National Conference, to be held July 15-17, 2011, in Minneapolis/ St. Paul MN will be no exception. Pre-conference registration ended June 24th.

If you are unable to attend, you will still have the opportunity to purchase recordings of workshop sessions and DVDs of keynote speakers after the conference.

If you are attending, please note the Sheraton Bloomington-Minneapolis South will become the Doubletree Bloomington-Minneapolis South the same week as the start of the conference.

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### **Bereaved Parents of the USA 2011 National Gathering**

This event will be held July 28-31 in Reston, VA at the Sheraton Reston Hotel near Dulles International Airport. For additional Information, go to [www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org).

TCF has a supply of the blue & white wristbands. Each one is stamped with "Forever in my heart" and a butterfly on each side. Selling for \$3.00 each, our chapter keeps \$2.00. Please see Lilyan Heuple for purchase

If you would like to put a poem, special remembrance or article in the Newsletter, please email Katherine Bloom @ [Katherinx@aol.com](mailto:Katherinx@aol.com)

## POETRY CORNER

### My Son

I've poured my heart out for the love I've lost  
I've cried the bitter tears  
time has no meaning and all the years  
will take their toll at any cost

And yet I have one love still  
who brings light to shine on me  
The boy I raised is now a man  
and more proud I could not be

My son, my son the quiet one  
whose smile makes my day  
The little boy with legos and crayons  
with no limits on his imagination  
Is now an artist with brushes and a spray can  
colors dancing in his head  
and field of white becomes a space  
of energy and verve  
He has wit, he has love, and to tell the truth  
he has a lot of nerve  
To have grown up before my eyes  
from my child to my friend,  
To one I can rely on,  
to love, to cherish to the end  
of time, and now I can hope to see him still grow  
as I sit back and and enjoy the show

by  
Katherine Bloom

**“... there is no more ridiculous custom than the one that makes you express sympathy once and for all on a given day to a person whose sorrow will endure as long as his life. Such grief, felt in such a way, is always “present,” it is never too late to talk about it, never repetitious to mention it again.”**

~~ Marcel Proust~~

## **The Broken Chain**

We little knew that morning that God  
Was going to call your name.  
In life we loved you dearly,  
In death we do the same.

It broke our hearts to lose you,  
You did not go alone;  
For part of us went with you,  
The day God called you home.

You left us peaceful memories,  
Your love is still our guide;  
And though we cannot see you,  
You are always at our side.

Our family chain is broken,  
And nothing seems the same;  
But as God calls us one by one,  
The chain will link again.

By Dexsa in Hudson, WI

**In Loving Memory of  
Robbie Heupel, died 7-12-00**

From Lilyan and Jerry Heupel

## **Drifting....**

Drifting through life is how I feel  
The death of my son, doesn't seem real.  
I catch myself laughing the next moment I cry.  
I try to quote reason, but my mouth spills out "why"?  
I stare at his photo, now spotted with tears.  
More distance from him is one of my fears.  
My beautiful boy – his life became shorter.  
Why couldn't I go first? - That's the right order.  
So I'll continue to drift along life's falling rain,  
until the day when our hearts meet again.

Kelly Boerger, TCF Cincinnati



## FUNNY MOMENTS

Kira used to work at a popular deli/ restaurant in Olney named BJ Pumpnickel's. She started there when she was about 15 years old, so she could have her own spending money for movies, lipstick, and various teenage girl stuff. Her first position there was as a Hostess, greeting and seating customers. At 18, she was promoted to waitress. It was much more work, but she made great tips. People used to wait in line to get seated at Kira's tables. She was an excellent waitress, attentive and friendly.

I used to go and sit for hours at her table, so she would not have to “work” it, but knew she would get a good tip from me. I went so often the owner knew and didn't mind my staying so long, as I often brought other people in. The staff knew me and I even got friendly with other regulars. I often would order food she liked, as Kira would sit down with me for a couple of minutes and nibble off my plate. I rarely ordered dessert. One evening, I was sitting near the front, and one of Kira's regulars was seated

right across the aisle. Kira always gave the man extra special attention, as he was developmentally challenged. She would help him order and bring him extra things. The restaurant's specialty was 7 layer cakes. They were humongous pieces enough for at least two people. Kira said she was in the mood for chocolate cake. I told her I didn't want any, but would order a piece for her. She said it would be too much. So what did Kira do? She suggested her customer order a piece of chocolate cake. He also said it was too much for him to eat. Kira, being so resourceful, brought him the cake, cut the slice in half, sat down and she and her customer enjoyed their cake. Kira then came over to me and asked if I'd mind if she didn't give me her employee 50% discount that night. I said no problem. When her customer was ready to pay his bill, Kira gave him the discount and refused a tip. He joked with her that she had plotted the whole thing just to get some cake. She laughed and said, “of course I did and wasn't is really delicious?” they both had a big laugh and I noticed several other customers enjoyed the “plot” as well!

# LOVE GIFTS

Katherine Bloom for Kira Bloom  
Colleen Boskin for Patrick Elasik  
Sharon Kohout for Shayne  
Susan & Carl Johnson for Mike  
Debra Thornton for Crystal  
Doris Sensabaugh for Tammy  
Alex & Marlem Stein for Claudia



## 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 meeting with Love Gift envelopes or you may mail your Love gift to:**

George Beall  
798 Kimberly Court E  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

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



## OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED



### APRIL

Carol Danforth

“

Julie & David Walker Gribbon

Alison Meske

Nancy & Fritz Schultz

Edye & Fred Smith

Barbara & Ted Tate

Linda Vasquez

C. Diego Danforth

M. Socorro Danforth

Matthew Walker Gribbon

Kristin Meske

Steven McGrath

Stephen Smith

James Tate

Kathleen Vasquez

### MAY

David Allison

Katherine & Larry Bloom

Gilda & Fulvio Carboraro

Rebecca Domaruk

Joann Goldberg

Louise & Joseph Ellinger

Robert Goor

Barbara & Barry Gordon

Rita & Richard Helgeson

Joan & Leroy Jerry

Ginny & Mike Mazzuca

Sandi McGee

Dave Nelson

Arlene Stein

Leslie Thomas

Joshua Allison

Kira Bloom

Alex Carboraro

Paul Domaruk

Victoria Lewis

Doug Ellinger

Andrew Goor

Jonathan Blank

Andrew Helgeson

Leroy Jerry III

Joseph Mazzuca

Thomas Mizerek

Grant Nelson

Sonora Stein

Scott Thomas

## JUNE

Sandra & Louis Dobbies  
Penny & Manny Flecker  
Judith Friedenberg  
Brigitte & Stephan Ladisch  
Kathy Noble  
Donna & Howard Parzow  
Debbie & Daryl Thornton  
Claire Wilk

Allan Goldberg  
Norman  
Sebastian Herbstein  
Gwenola  
George  
Brian McClure  
Crystal  
James

## JULY

Lisa & Jeffrey Banana  
Mary Barzargan  
Sandra Coles (Bell) & Herman Bell  
Phyliss Belzer  
Joan & Tereston Bertrand  
Teresa Donaldson  
Nancy & Mike Frank  
JoAnn Gellman  
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel  
Ellen Lee  
Vickie Bender & Kenneth Ramey  
Ellen & Elliott Shaller  
Ania Galecki (Tomar) & Jon Tomar  
Joan & Stanley Weiss

Nikeem Banana  
Azin Aaimi  
Corinne Bell  
Alan Belzer  
Tereston Bertrand Jr  
William Donaldson  
Daniel Frank  
William Gellman  
Robert Heupel  
Stephen Lee  
Kenneth Ramey  
Amy Shaller  
Chris Galecki  
Jonathan Weiss

## SIBLING SECTION

Dear Friends;

My name is Andrea Keller. I lost my younger brother and only sibling, Jon, on May 2, 2009. I am rebuilding an adult sibling loss support group through TCF Potomac Chapter as well as other venues.

I wish I was writing to you for a different reason.

I want to first say I am so sorry to hear about the loss of your sibling. I attended a couple meetings of The Compassionate Friends ("TCF") Potomac chapter right after Jon died, and while I know my parents have found it to be very helpful to them, my grief was profoundly different from theirs. Since I am not one to shy away from a cause that I believe in, I have made it my mission to find and create other forums for adult siblings who, like me, need somewhere to go where they can vent their grief to other siblings that understand the type of grief that we are all going through.

Here are the ongoing events that are open to all grieving adult siblings....

1. The Compassionate Friends Group (TCF) Potomac Chapter meets the first Tuesday of each month that is ongoing. They meet at the Potomac Presbyterian Church at 10301 River road, Potomac, MD 20854. If you are interested, I would be more than happy to arrange to have a facilitator for us at the TCF meeting, or we can just meet informally there, as a group. So far, we have not had a sufficient number of adult siblings present to establish our own sibling group under the auspices of TCF. But check out option #2 in this regard.
2. A group of us have been meeting informally at La Madeleine in Rockville the first Saturday of each month at 10 a. m. It is low key and without a facilitator.
3. If you are on Facebook, I have formed a support group of siblings and you can reach out to me there anytime - Andrea Blank Keller – or thru my email: [andrea@kellerprinting.com](mailto:andrea@kellerprinting.com)
4. Also, I created a closed group on Facebook just for siblings to post comments or any thoughts they were having in a forum where a response may or may not be expected or needed. This invite only group (Adult Sibling Loss Support Group -MD/ DC/ VA) is a place to voice those feelings to people who are going through the same experiences.
5. Another group that I have participated in is the weekly TCF online support group chats that is for siblings only on Thursday nights from 9-10 pm. To sign up, go to the website which is: [http://www.compassionatefriends.org/online\\_support.aspx](http://www.compassionatefriends.org/online_support.aspx).

I hope at least one of these adult sibling support groups will be of interest to you. Please feel free to email me with any other options you know of or just to provide feedback. I am here for you and would be happy to help if I can.

Unfortunately this is one club none of us wishes we were members of, but hopefully we can help each other I look forward to hearing from you.

Andrea Keller  
Andrea.kellerprinting.com (email)  
301-802-1855 (cell)

## SIBLINGS WALKING TOGETHER

We are the surviving siblings of the Compassionate Friends.  
We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters.  
Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us.  
Sometimes we will need the support of our friends, At other times we need our families to be there.  
Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us,  
continuing to become the individuals we want to be.  
We cannot be our dead brother or sister;  
however, a special part of them lives on with us.  
When our brothers and sisters died, our live changed.  
We are living a life very different from what we envisioned,  
and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when e feel weak.  
Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others  
the value of family and the precious gift of life.  
Our goal is not to e the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are,  
but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of  
The Compassionate Friends

The Compassionate Friends



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To contact TCF Potomac Chapter:

Potomac Compassionate Friends  
c/o  
Nancy Frank  
3205 Kilkenny Street  
Silver spring, MD 20904