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**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  
TCFPotomacMD.com

**Summer 2013**

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**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](http://WWW.Compassionatefriends.org)

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



Hope isn't a place or a thing. Hope isn't the absence of pain or sadness or sorrow. Hope is possibility. Hope is the memory of love given and received.

Darcie Sims

## Letter from the Editor

I celebrated the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend with about 1,500 family members of The Compassionate Friends at the Boston TCF Conference. This was only my 2<sup>nd</sup> conference and it was a such gratifying experience, I am already making my plans for the 2014 conference in Chicago.

Opening ceremony speakers were the Horsley family, and Dr. Ken Druck was speaker at the Friday Luncheon. These Keynote Speakers were inspiring and moved many to tears as they empathized with the speakers stories of loss and recalled their own.

As everyone walked around to their various workshops, I could tell many attendees had been to conferences before, as there were as many embraces and hugs between people who had not seen one another for a year or more. As always, there were many workshops to chose from, and I had to forego one or two to allow me to take a couple which I felt had a higher personal priority. The old expression, "so much to do and so little time" certainly rang true for me. There were several new categories and the familiar ones to appeal to everyone who was there. This year, I also participated in several of the Sharing sessions, which are offered in the evenings. I found this setting to be more intimate and give everyone a chance to speak, somewhat similar to our monthly meetings.

Saturday night was the Candle Lighting Ceremony, with Clementina Chery as speaker. Then, as everyone held a lighted candle (though not real flame) high in the dark, spoke our loved ones names, I doubt there was a dry eye in the hall.

Nancy Frank and I walked the Walk to Remember together and despite the heat, we

made it. It was fun and since Nancy knows so many people from all over the country, I got to meet even more people through her. Closing ceremonies after the walk was great, as the Sibling Group put on quite a show. Their wit and dedication was both moving and fun to watch. Bill Hancock was the closing speaker and left us inspired to keep living our lives and still hold our lost children close to our hearts. As we know, this is often not as easy as it sounds, yet it's the best we can do.

Nancy and I stayed an extra night and we took advantage of our time and took a Duck Tour of Boston which was a lot of fun and relaxing.

As people were leaving for home after the Conference, most did not say Goodbye. Instead, I kept hearing "see you in Chicago!" I know for myself, it's how I felt and hope to see some of the new friends I met again in the Windy City.



## **GRATITUDE...The Key to Happiness by Richard Edler**

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude...I have thought a lot about this idea since my son, Mark, died five years ago. At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during a TCF meeting. These were people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living.

....How dare they laugh? How dare they appear normal when their children have died? But over the last five years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- **Life goes on and we must too.**

Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 a.m. And we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt, but then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget, but we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life.... I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us.

- **We become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost.**

I see people in our chapter's meetings every month who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" who want no part of life again. But I ask that they also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, ..life in a free country, faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse whom they love. Nobody has it all, but compared to most, we have a lot.

- **The life we now lead will be better than it would have been.**

That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be a better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt, because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel."

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward and we can.

By Rich Edler, who lived in LA California, was a member of the TCF Board of Directors, and a dynamic speaker at TCF conventions; he is now deceased. Submitted by Susan Johnson, TCF Potomac, MD



### **An Overview of our Trip to TCF Boston** Contributed by Debbie Thornton

The 2013 Compassionate Friends National Conference, held in Boston, Mass., was a hot one. Literally, Boston was having a heat wave and temperatures were in the 90's every day! However, Daryl and I braved the heat and humidity to do some sightseeing before the Conference started. As with any historical city, there is so much to see and never enough time to "do it all." We traveled to most places by subway.

We went to the Boston Common, the oldest park in the U.S. Historically, hangings were held there. Now, it is a large family park with lakes, ponds, jogging paths, and the Swan Boats. These boats have been a cultural icon in the Public Gardens for 135 years and is a fifth generation business. They give rides around the lake and are pedal powered by the driver. These boats were famed for their part in the books Make Way for Ducklings and Trumpet of the Swan.

The "Walk to Remember" was held Sunday morning along a walking path in the Boston Common. This is the first year I've participated in

the walk (because of a bad knee) and it was so inspiring to see so many people walking to remember their loved ones.

We visited Harvard and walked around the campus. Daryl and I made a quick trip to MIT to get a T-shirt and a coffee mug.

On the morning of July 4 we went to the old State House, dating back to 1713, for the annual reading of the Declaration of Independence. We also went to the Museum of Science and saw the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Butterfly Garden and an IMax movie on the Canadian Pacific Railroad. We also were able to watch the fireworks from the museum's garage roof, hot, but nice.

After the Conference, we took the Duck tour around Boston, which was really neat. It is interesting how really old buildings are among modern ones. The tour guide told us 'if the building is brick or stone, you can figure it is old Boston'. We also went to Quincy Market with its many shops and eateries, including "Cheers".

Friday started the TCF conference with its many workshops, Walls of Remembrance (photos of our lost children), special sibling workshops and activities, button making, etc. At the closing ceremony it was announced 1500 buttons had been made during the two days!



### **The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual TCF Conference Boston, MA July 5 -7 2013**

Contributed by Debbie Thornton

This is the third TCF Conference my husband Daryl and I have been to, and as always, there are things to “take away”. It is encouraging to meet people farther along in their grief and see how, with time, our grief changes. We will never forget our child (ren) and the void from their absence, but we will heal as we travel down this path.

One of the workshops I attended was for the loss of an adult child. ( We lost our perfectly healthy Crystal at 30 years of age from a ruptured aorta). Several people commented they were told “that's not a child!” because of their age. Our child is our child, regardless of how old they are – living or dead. That comment falls into the “stupid things people say” category. Our capacity to handle life's circumstances change after the loss of our child. We become less tolerant of the “stupid things”. We've faced the worst thing which can happen to a parent, so our view of life becomes precious and we certainly don't sweat the small stuff. Many parents who lose an adult child also have to deal with in-laws and changing relationships. There may be differences in how to have the funeral service and other arrangements. How those relationships change vary and, unfortunately, can

be stressful. We were fortunate that our daughter never married, and we have custody of our granddaughter.

Another workshop was about how children grieve and what we can do. Children grieve differently than adults, as they often don't have the words to express feelings or thoughts. Or, they may not even know they are feeling grief. Sometimes a child may think they caused the death and have many “if only...” thoughts. For instance, ' if I had not argued with \_\_\_\_\_, they'd still be here' or 'if I had behaved better or been nicer or...'. They may act out or be angry. They try to make sense of the world, as are we, the adults. Spend time talking with your child and one of the best places is in the car. They are a captive audience and the conversation ends upon arrival of your

destination. This is a great time to talk about *anything* with your child because of those two reasons, so take advantage of it.

We also know women and men grieve differently. Women tap into emotions more easily and talk, whereas men hold things in and “feel weird”. The speaker said to ask a male “what is going on in your body?” if they say that. Holding it in may physically affect their stomach, head, throat, etc. It's worth a try.



**TCF Conference Workshop “Secondary Losses - Am I Crazy or is This Grief?”**

Presenter: Bettie-Jean Rivard Darby  
Contributed by Debbie Thornton  
Crystal's Mom 11-5-77 to 6-20-08

While losing a child is the biggest heart wrenching tragedy we have faced, a loss we never get over, just adjust to, there are secondary losses we also deal with. Even 5 years out in my loss, I had not recognized some of these. Some of the losses we learn right away, while others take time to notice.

- Loss of hope, future, dreams, plans a piece of our past, family structure
- Loss of focus, decision making, seeing choices/options, seeing clearly
- Loss of health, sleep, posture, balance, sanity
- Loss of self esteem, self confidence, gentle nature, identity
- Loss of anticipation, enjoyment, “looking forward to”, emptiness
- Loss of relationships; friends and family, loss of places in/out of home because of memories and/or anxiety (child's room or favorite place)
- Loss of mobility/ driving early on because we are a wreck (upset, crying, etc)
- Loss of intimacy/sex and we feel empty inside

Plus other losses I probably missed writing down

We have to learn every single day how to live again. Learn how to love and enjoy life. Don't become a lateral victim of your child's death. Slowly you will come out of the shock and numbness of the first year or so, and you will begin to feel again. Allow yourself to feel, to live, to experience life. Tell yourself “I'm not crazy, I'm just grieving!” however often you need to and believe it!

Remember: “I'm NOT crazy, I'm just grieving!” and be gentle with yourself. This speaker told us that now, up to the 6th anniversary, we are still newly bereaved. As I said, I am 5 years into this journey, and 5 years seems like a milestone but also brought back some of the earlier years' anxiety. So, I'm NOT crazy!



## 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.

## 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

The Steering Committee would like to invite members to attend our Quarterly meetings to see if they would like to join in the running of the Potomac Chapter. Please be willing to be an active participant. The Steering Committee is all volunteer, and is an integral part in planning how the group is run month to month and the Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony.

# LOVE GIFTS

Barbara & George Beall	Barbara Lynn
Katherine Bloom	Kira
Nancy & Gregory Cox	Bradley
Barbara & Barry Gordon	Jonathan Blank
Leslie & Michael Greenberg	Jonathan Blank
Andrea Keller	Jonathan Blank
Kathleen & John Kennedy	Molly
Ellen Lee	Steve
Judith & Lawrence Lorber	Jonathan Blank
Mary & German Nader	Carolyn
Pampered Chef Fundraiser	Jonathan Blank
Mitzi Sereno	Andrea
Barbara Tatge	Alexander Finamore
Debra & Daryl Thornton	Crystal
Linda Vasquez	Kathleen & Sonya



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 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.

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



## APRIL 2013

Patricia DeSimone  
Robert LaJeuness  
Nancy & Fritz Schultz  
Barbara & Ted Tate  
Linda Vasquez

James (McIhaime)  
Elijah  
Steven(McGrath)  
James  
Kathleen

## MAY 2013

Katherine & Larry Bloom  
Nancy & Gregory Cox  
Rebecca Domaruk  
Sandra Giger  
Robert Goor  
Barbara & Barry Gordon  
Rita & Richard Helgeson  
Sharon Kohout  
Sandi McGee  
Arlene Stein

Kira  
Bradley  
Paul  
Robert (Yin)  
Andrew  
Jonathan (Blank)  
Andrew  
Shayne Ann  
Thomas (Mizerek)  
Sonora Lyn

## **JUNE 2013**

Brigitte & Stephan Ladisch	Gwenola
Kathy Noble	George
Donna & Howard Parzow	Brian (McClure)
Riah & Josh Taylor	Aiden
Debbie & Daryl Thornton	Crystal
Claire Wilk	James

## **JULY 2013**

Sandra & Herman Coles-Bell	Corinne (Bell)
Phyliss Belzer	Alan
Alison Luchs & Phil Bloom	Mike (Bloom)
Joan & Tereston Bertrand	Tereston Jr.
Charlotte & Walter Cohen	Jason
Nancy Frank	Daniel
JoAnn Gellman	William
Lilyann & Gerald Heupel	Robert
Ellen Lee	Stephen
Mitzi & Ed Sereno	Andrea
Ellen & Elliott Shaller	Amy
Ania & Jon Tomar-Galecki	Chris (Galecki)
Joan & Stanley Weiss	Jonathan

## **AUGUST 2013**

Lisa & Bruce Alexander	Codi
Barbara & George Beall	Barbara
Barbara & Ed Campbell	Craig
Sharon Casey	John (Marsh)
Kelly Heller	Margaret (Hernandez)
Susan & Carl Johnson	Michael
Vivian Kim	Susanna
Mary Mandeville	Kenneth
Margaret & John McGorern	Patrick
Laurie & Jack Purdum	Matthew
Nathalie Silver	Celine
Charlotte Taylor	Michael (Moyer)

Sorrow comes is great waves...but it rolls over us, and though it may also smother us, it leaves us on the spot and we know that if it is strong, we are stronger, inasmuch as it passes and we remain

Henry James

