


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

Winter 2011

Co-Leaders	Nancy Frank Mary Mandeville
Treasurer	George Beall
New Members	Barbara Beall
Remembrances	Mary Nader
Librarian	Nancy Pinto
Outreach	Susan Johnson
Hospitality	Joann Gellman
Newsletter	Katherine Bloom
Google Group Manager	Barry Gordon
Member at Large	Rob Goor

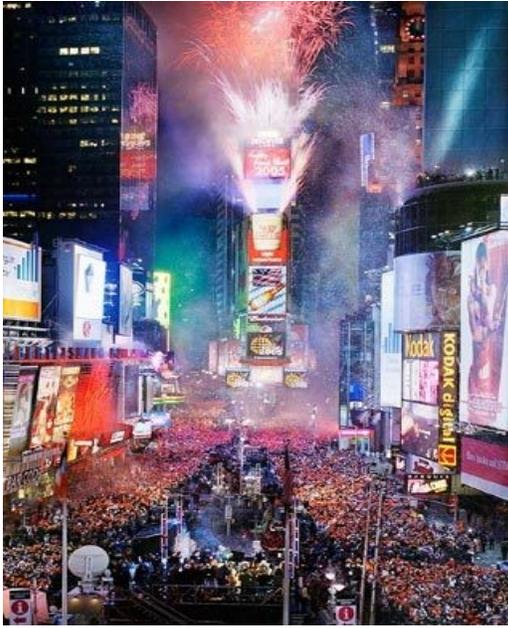
The Compassionate Friends Mission

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.



National Organization:
The Compassionate Friends:
 P.O. Box 3696
 Oak Brook, IL 60255-3696
 National Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough.
 ~Rabindranath Tagore~



Letter from the Editor

A New Year...how does each of us relate to another year passing? With relief, dread, some element of joy? I found myself thinking the calendar was my enemy. I've been able to say Kira died last year, which is some way kept me connected to her. Now, with the change of date, I feel I've loosened that connection somehow. Now, I will have to say, I lost my daughter 2 years ago, and then it will be three and so on. Since it still feels so fresh in my mind and heart, it's disconcerting to think of her passing as longer ago. Why the calendar seems to have such power over me is a mystery. Time is supposed to soften the edges of loss, not make it more painful. Another lesson learned on this treacherous journey.

Now that the holidays are over, I have been thinking of each of you and wondering how you all fared and dealt with your particular situations. Did each of you have happy moments with family and friends? Was there a cloud over your days? I was invited to accompany my elderly, and favorite, aunt on a cruise to the Caribbean for 9 days. It was my first cruise, over the Christmas holiday, and I allowed myself to "be in the moment" and enjoy the change of scenery and experience all the newness of what I was seeing. Thoughts of Kira were always in my mind, yet I was able to feel good and appreciate the vacation and all its aspects.

I have not made any New Year's resolutions, as life has taught me they rarely come to fruition, for one reason or

another. Rather, I set one goal for myself, something doable, something important to me, and something that will make me feel that I have accomplished something. Have any of you set resolutions? Goals? Do you have a plan to make this coming year a worthwhile one for yourself? For the newly grieving, just getting out of bed every day can be a challenge, so that counts as a goal. For those farther down the path, the continued help you offer the rest of us is a worthy accomplishment. Some of us are carrying on some family traditions despite our losses, while others are finding starting afresh, creating new traditions works best for them. Whether we spend holidays with family, friends or on our own, it can be a time of reflection, remembering, and holding our loved ones close in our hearts.

I wish all of you a year filled with love, comfort, and peace. It is my hope the Chapter will continue to provide the support for each of you, as it has been doing for the years past. Even in our ongoing grief journey, I find we have options, ways of navigating through the labyrinth of what life has dealt us, and a path to emotional strength. While every day can be challenging, there is hope, more love and friendship to be found. I will be eternally grateful to everyone for guiding me on my journey so far.

One More Thought

At a recent meeting, one participant said he had an upcoming wedding to attend, yet was going to decline the invitation. The idea was either he felt he could not participate in the joyous occasion through his grief for his child, or perhaps he felt an inner envy for a wedding he could never go to for his son. Maybe a little of both. I wrote about this story in the Google group, however, not everyone subscribes to it, so here it is again. Not too long I went to the wedding of my manager from work. For months I agonized over the event, and yet, it was virtually mandatory I go. Here were my thoughts at the time. At the conference in July, one of the workshop presenters said he and his wife do not go to weddings, bar mitzvahs, christenings, or any other celebratory events. He said it was because it's too painful knowing they will not share any of that with their daughter. I certainly understood what he meant. Yet, I was facing the wedding of my manager, a celebration I could not avoid. I thought about, fretted about it, became increasingly anxious about it.

To top it off, my manager hinted she wanted me to make her a bridal shower at work. No stress, huh?

All I could think about was when I gave my daughter a baby shower almost 2 years ago. It was so hard to keep what happened to Kira separate from what I was facing now. To add to this, my manager talked about nothing else for months.

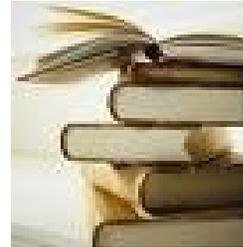
So I enlisted a friend at work to make the shower with me. She lost her infant daughter only 4 months before Kira died. Also, she is a good friend of the bride to be. We went through all the shopping, soliciting of donations for gifts, invites, decorations ordering food. Having someone with me with a shared tragedy somehow made everything more OK, even fun sometimes.

The shower was a surprise and a success. I didn't shed a tear. Everyone had a good time, we collected enough from work friends to get really nice gifts. So all that was left was the wedding. Dread, and more dread. I confided to a couple of friends how much I didn't want to go. I had nothing to wear. I would get lost on the way..... I pulled out every excuse I could come up with. So the big day was October 2nd. I got my nails done, I put together a decent outfit, put on some make-up. My special friend was with me. He had tolerated 6 months of my anxiety.

My "Make the Shower" Colleague sat in the pew behind me at the church. She was the Keeper of the Tissues. We didn't dare look at one another, but we both felt the protectiveness of each other. The music started, bride's mother walked down the aisle, the flower girls walked throwing rose petals, and then the bride came down the aisle. I had one flash of imagining Kira, with her long black hair in a wedding gown. My manager is a blond. I pushed my wistful thoughts out of my head. Vows were exchanged, it was over. I was dry eyed. I turned to my friend, no tissues left the pack. We made it!

The reception presented another challenge. Dinner, dancing, catching up with some old friends. I had dreaded what I thought would be the "question".... How am I doing? No one asked. I got a couple extra hugs, and that was it. Then the dancing... they MADE me get up. Some friends! I had some fun. I felt so self aware, everything was like looking through a crystal clear pool. but not a ripple of a tear. On the way home, I knew I had crossed another milestone. I could go out. I could be happy for someone else. I could do it and not be envious of what will never be for Kira. I'll never get to be the mother of the bride now, but I was a good friend for a day. It was enough.

BOOK REVIEW



WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS By Judith R. Bernstein, Ph.D.

For the first 14 months after Kira died, I did not read a single book about grief. After all, I was living the nightmare, so what need did I have of someone else telling how I should feel? At last year's conference, after hearing, and meeting, a couple authors of grief books, I bought one, then two. Another book was recently recommended to me about sibling loss, called The Empty Room. My son refuses to read it, but I looked for it anyway. Stores didn't carry it, so I went online and found it. While ordering, I saw another title that interested me, called When the Bough Breaks. Something about the title intrigued me, so I ordered it, too. I read this one first. This is the book I will now review. The book is written by Judith R. Bernstein, PhD. This book is phenomenal, in my opinion. It covers just about every facet of child loss and examines the lifelong repercussions we all now face. Every chapter had something I could relate to regarding mourning, relationships, faith and living one's new life in the face of our tragic losses. The author wrote of her own experiences, as well as interviewing other bereaved parents. The book is an easy read, other than the heartbreak it contains. With that, it also plants the seeds of hope and a future for families. It is a road map one can follow through the treacherous paths we now traverse.

If the book is not already in our TCF library, I will pass it around to whoever wants it.

Saying Goodbye

by

Barbara Beall

TCF Potomac, MD

My daughter Barbara died 77 months ago, August of 2004. I don't know why I measure the time since her death in months ~ perhaps it makes it feel like a shorter period of time.

The memory of her 34th birthday is still so clear. Our whole family was together having dinner outdoors on a beautiful summer evening at a beautiful restaurant. There were two very important events unfolding in her life. We were meeting her boyfriend for the first time and we were anxiously awaiting the results of the lumpectomy she had just undergone.

The next day was horrible. I accompanied her to the surgeons office, and were told that the results were positive for breast cancer. None of us could possibly know that within thirteen months she would be dead.

Despite endless rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, and multiple surgeries, she was told in January that she had about six months to live. We watched a vibrant young woman lose her independence an inch at a time. By March she had to leave her lovely home and move in with Mom and Dad so we could help to care for her. Barbara was a real fighter, and all she wanted during these final months was "to have a normal life". She could no longer drive because of unexpected seizures, so she and her father would leave the house each morning at 6 am for the trip down to NIH, so she could continue her work as a therapist there. He would drop her off, and a co-worker would be waiting outside with a wheelchair to assist her in getting to her office on the 13th floor. How she loved that hospital and her job!. She worked on the Pediatric /Oncology Unit. She went in each day until two days before her death, although in the final months she did only administrative functions – she felt her appearance would be too upsetting to the other cancer patients and their parents. Many people have told us we were very lucky that because Barbara had a long term illness, we were able to say goodbye to her. Can you imagine that seeing our daughter suffer for thirteen months and then die makes us lucky??? Parents who have lost a child in a sudden and unexpected death feel one of the worst parts of that is the fact they had no

opportunity for a real good-bye. Believe me, the ability to say these words is highly overrated. Actually, we never did say goodbye, but instead, each of us sat at her

bedside and told her she had to let go – in other words, we told her it was alright for her to die, that she had suffered enough. I remember so vividly stroking her precious face, and telling her “ Barbara, Dad and I will be alright ~ please don't worry about him.” Her father then went in and spoke with her for a few minutes. She died, peacefully, within 45 minutes of their final conversation. We never did say “goodbye”.



Noelle's Story

Noelle Valenti had a writing assignment last night. She chose her experiences from the meeting to write about. I think her piece is so eloquently and sweetly written that I wanted to share it with the group.....Please see below.....Lise

My Life on January 4th, 2011 at 9:00 PM

Who am I? I am a grieving heartbroken yet outgoing 16 year old. I am sentimental, empathetic, upbeat, and I try support my mom when times are hard. I am a joker who loves to make people laugh but at times very serious, and aware of all the ups and downs I have encountered. I am Noelle Valenta. What is happening at this point in the scene? My left hand is being held by my mother while my right hand is being held by a mother of a deceased child. 20 to 25 people including me are in this circle holding hands as I listen to a mother talk to her deceased child and give thanks for all the support

she has found in the group. It is very quiet and the mood is mutual, we are thankful to have support when dealing with a love one dying, while we are very heartbroken and sad about the reason we have to be here.

What time is it? It is time to grieve and remember our loved ones who have passed. It is time to hold hands and talk to the ones we were never ready to say goodbye to. It's almost time to end the meeting, it is 9:00 PM.

Where am I? I am one of many at a Compassionate Friends meeting held in a church. The meeting has nothing to do with church, but the room I am in is full of things such as pictures of important people from the church, flowers, and a bunch of chairs. I am in a room that is supposed to make one feel safe to talk about their loved ones and to talk about how different their lives are without seeing their faces every day. I am on the earth. I am in America. I am in Maryland. I am in Potomac. I am in a church where it is safe to talk about your emotions.

What surrounds me? I am surrounded by men and women, wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. I am surrounded by tears and sorrow. I am surrounded by a group of people in a circle. I am surrounded by empty chairs, random desserts, flowers, and a quiet room. I am surrounded by passion and empathy.

What are my given circumstances? I am here to talk about my brother who recently passed away. I am here to talk to other people who have lost someone they love. I am here because it is the month that my brother left this world, and when it is the anniversary month, one is supposed to share stories and pictures of the loved ones. I am here because my mother wanted me to come with her and help her get through sad moments. I am here because my mother wanted me to come so I could benefit. I am here because I share a similarity with all the people in the room.

What is my relationship? I am a stranger to mostly everyone in the room though some probably recognize my face from past meetings. I am accompanied by my mother, and I am here to talk about my older brother.

What do I want? I want to hear from others who have gone through some similar events that I have gone through. I want to hear the stories about the deceased, and how some people live without that person.

What is in my way? Some people do not want to share. Some people are too emotional to share their stories. Being impatient is in my way because though I am very intrigued by what others have to say, yet I want to go home and sleep. Time is in my way because it is night time and I have work to do and school in the morning so I cannot be up all night.

What do I do to get what I want? I get what I want by coming to the meeting. I get what I want by listening to others and feel their powerful stories. I get what I want by being physically and emotionally connected to the people holding my hands. I am getting what I want by being empathetic.



Contributed by Colleen

Don't grieve for me,
for now, I'm free!

I follow the plan God laid for me.
I saw His face.

I heard His call.

I took His hand and left it all...

I could not stay another day.
to love, to laugh, to work or play;
tasks left undone must stay that way.

And if my parting has left a void, then fill it with

REMEMBERED JOY

A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss..
Ah yes, these things I, too shall miss.

My life's been full, I've savored much:
good times,
good friends,
a loved-one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief--
don't shorten yours with undue grief.

Be not burdened with tears of sorrow.
Enjoy the SUNSHINE of the 'morrow.

Poetry Corner

Valentine Message

by

Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF Texas

I send this message to my child
Who no longer walks this plane
A message filled love
Yet also filled with pain
My heart continues to skip a beat
When I ponder your early death
As I think of times we'll never share
I must stop and catch my breath
Valentine's Day is for those who love
And for those who receive love, too
For a parent the perfect love in life
Is the love I've given you.
I'm thinking of you this day, my child,
With a sadness that is unspoken
As I mark another Valentine's day
with a heart that is forever broken



The Wedding

by Katherine Bloom

I sat dry eyed as the little girl
Spread flowers on the floor
I didn't stir
knowing there would be more
The mother in blue proudly marched along
I still sat
no tear in my eye
And then she came
all dressed in white
Radiant, with a smile on her face
I trembled, wondering, how could I be in this
place
Then a strange thing happened
my heart was full
Only joy for the bride and
no tug or pull
for knowing I'll never take my place
As mother of the bride
The mask fell away I had a smile of joy
on my real face



Dare I

by Rick McCauley

Am I wrong to enjoy myself, to laugh? To sing? To smile?

Am I wrong to go out with friends, to get a way for just a while?

Must I always surround myself with sorrow, and loss and tears?

How long will Death strangle me? More days, more months, more years?

Once I thought a smile would never again fit upon my face

Laughter nor humor, nor happiness would ever fill my space.

I lost my life, my love, my child, all my fun was gone

Things enjoyed by the two of us, would never be enjoyed by one.

I've lived in gloom, in emptiness, with memories of times gone by

I've lived in pictures of the past, and seeing each smile I'd cry.

I put on my face, and head out the door, hoping I could be strong

Avoiding places we used to go, As if I'd no longer belong.

But recently I've caught myself, a smile did I dare to chance?

Go to dinner with a friend, a wedding, An urge to even dance?

What's wrong with me? How could I possibly... consider a happy day

It's not allowed, it's frowned upon, what would people say?

The more honest I am with myself, the more I listen to family and friends

The more I dare to open the door, the more my disaster ends.

I will never again be quite the same, never forget the heartache and pain

My love for my child won't let me be who I once was ever again

But in order to remember the yesterdays, the tomorrows still need to come

And I'll need to speak, to listen, and see, not act deaf, or blind, or dumb.

I'll need to want to go on, to find reasons acceptable to me

Reasons to be positive, to hold my head up for everyone to see.

So if I'm wrong, then shame on me, let them talk behind my back

But I think I can honor my child the best, by getting back on track

And to laugh, as well as cry, to smile as much as frown

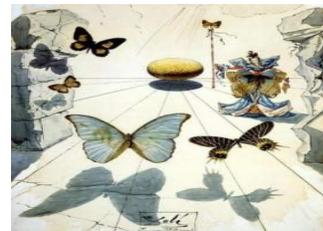
To not force others to push me away, rather want me to be around.

So if you see me with my friends, with that smile upon my face

If you hear me laughing, sharing joy,... please join me in my space

And if you happen to see me dance, for my age perhaps acting wild

Have no doubt, it's not forgetting, but remembering the life of my child.



December Candle Lighting

Ceremony

2010



Though it may seem like a long time ago, especially since we've missed one meeting, I want to thank everyone involved in the December Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony. This one was different for me, as I was able to see some of the behind the scenes work to put it all together, and thus be more appreciative of the event. We had a phenomenal turnout with so many heartfelt expressions of the enduring love for our children. While many tear fell, it was an unforgettable experience for both newcomers and those of us who have been there before. Linda Tebelman was an inspiring speaker with her message of HOPE. I believe everyone could relate to much of what Linda had to offer and was appreciative of her sensitivity to our needs as grieving parents and siblings.

The committee would like to hear from anyone with any thoughts or suggestions on how to possibly improve the experience for everyone in 2011. A special thanks to Linda Tebelman, Director of Bereavement Services at Montgomery Hospice for her inspiring talk of Hope. If anyone would like a copy of the speech, it can be requested through the Google group.

Words of Wisdom

“What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us”

Helen Keller

Go into your grief, for there your soul will grow

Carl Jung

After despair, many hopes flourish, just after darkness, Thousands of suns open and Start to shine.

Rumi

May You Not Walk Alone

I share with you the agony of your grief, the anguish of your heart finds echoes in my own. I know I cannot enter all you feel nor bear with the burden of your pain; I can but offer what my love does give; the strength of caring, what warmth of one who seeks to understand the silent storm-swept barrenness of so great a loss. This I do in quiet ways, that on your lonely path you nay not walk alone.

Howard Thurman 1953

Special Announcements

TCF National Conference



34th National Conference
Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN
July 15-17, 2011



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

The National Organization is already planning the next National Conference to be held in Minneapolis, MN, from July 15, 2011 through July 17, 2011 at the Sheraton Blooming Hotel. For details, go to WWW.Compassionatefriends.org.

My personal experience at my first conference last July in Virginia was so positive and heartfelt, I will be making plans to go to this one in July. We will be offering more information at our monthly meetings regarding registration and the special events. It is my hope many from our chapter will be able to attend.

---- Katherine Bloom

LOVE GIFTS

Alison & Lauren Keller for Uncle Jonny
Micki & Irv Koniak for Lesley Koniak Garelick
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel fr Gerry & Robbie Heupel
Georgeann Bailey for Kira Bloom
Ted Speigel for Kira Bloom
Wanda Kamara for Malia Bostonlynn & Fred Lee for Nicole Lee
Mary & German Nader for Carolyn

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 and should be made payable to Potomac MD Compassionate Friends.** 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



October 2010 Birthdays

David Allison
Beverly Freund
Ray & Melody Manning

Joshua
Paul Quattlebaum
Bryce

October Anniversaries

Jacqueline Bernard
Patricia DeSimone
Halley Dunne
Rovi Faber
Gloria Hensel
Gerald & Lilan Heupel
Al & Lucille Reifman
Julian & Carol Cohen-Seidel

Darcy
Michael McIhaine
Jacob
Jodyann
Christopher
Gerald
Elizabeth
Jennifer

November 2010 Birthdays

Lisa & David Daniel
Halley Dunne
Ann & Joe Duffy
Barbara & Barry Gordon
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel
Beth Hillard

David
Jacob
Caroline Duffy
Jonathan
Robert
Jeannette

Ellen Lee	Stephen
Carolina & Percy Navaez	Alexander
Betty & Sjef Otten	Daniel
Carol & Julian Seidel	Jennifer
Maryard Simpson & Bill Smith	Benjamin
Alison Snow	Nicolas
Debbie & Daryl Thornton	Crystal
Joan Uhlig	Chris

November 2010 Anniversaries

Joanne Gellman	Julia
Peggy & Ainsley Gordon	Ainsley III
Micki & Irvin Koniak	Lesley
Kathleen & Thomas Pape	Barnaby
Theresa & Steve Spencer	Luke
Joan Uhlig	Jason
Margaret & Philip Waclawick	Carl
Joece & Matt Yuen	Michael

December 2010 Birthdays

Theresa & Lance Aug	Grant
Terry Bendel	Teresa
Jacqueline Bernard	Darcy
Anita & Gary Fields	Adam
Lyne & Larry Friedman	Brian
Margaret & Jack Gelin	Martha
Kathleen & Thomas Pape	Barnaby
Gail Tsu	Paul Regan
Margaret & Philip Waclawick	Carl

December 2010 Anniversaries

Beverly Freund	Paul Quattlebaum
Olivia Featherson	Troy
Wanda Michael	Stacy Gross
Mary & German Nader	Carolyn
Carolina & Percy Narvaez	Alexander
Ginny & Tim O'Conner	Robert

January 2011 Birthdays

Sandra & Lionel Chaiken	Pamela Sue
Leslie & Max Cohen	Adam
Carol Danforth	Maria
Paula Davis	Justin
Janet & William Frank	Alexander
Susan & Carl Johnson	Michael
Donna & Howard Parzo	Brian

January 2011 Anniversaries

Sonia Vasquez & L. Rodrigo Chaparro	Nicolas
Nathalie & Matthew Dykstra	Jasmine
Anita Ferguson	Jerry Joe
Betty & Donald Fick	Kenneth
Anita & Gary Fields	Adam
Lynn & Fred Lee	Nicole
Linda & Charles Lubin	Todd
Cheryl & Geoffrey Mack	Brenton Everson
Hope Phillips	Hilary
Marion & Paul Smith	Rachel
Margaret Simpson & Bill Smith	Benjamin
Lise & John Valenta	Troy

February 2011 Birthdays

Joan & John Bartell	Jenna
Nathalie & Matthew Dykstra	Jasmine
Olivia Featherson	Troy
Lorrie Fisher	Audrey
Dave Nelson	Claire
Nancy Schultz	Steven (McGrath)
Arlene Stein	Sonora
Jeannie & Tom Warfield	Richard

February 2011 Anniversaries

Terry Bendel	Teresa
Coleen Books	Joshua
Evelyn & Michael Byrne	Madlyn
Ann & Joe Duffy	Caroline
Lorrie Fisher	Audrey
Mary MacDonald	Keith (Savoy)

Wanda Michael	Stacy Rae (Gross)
Betty & Sjef Otten	Daniel
Gail Tsui	Paul (Regan)
Marsha & Robert Weinberg	Matthew
David Wilmot	David
Mary Wilmot	David

March 2011 Birthdays

Phyliss Belzer	Alan
Katherine Bloom	Kira Bloom
Larry Bloom	Kira Bloom
Evelyn & Michael Byrne	Madalyn
Carol Danforth	Carlos
Mariana & Craig Duncan	Nicholas Tate
Cheryl & Bob Evans	John
Judith Freidenberg	Sebastian Herbstein
Julie Walker & David Gribbon	Matthew
Rita & Richard Hegelson	Andrew
Kelly Heller	Margaret Hernandez
Lilyan & Gerald Heupel	Jerry
Denise Hyman	Alex
Cheryl Everson & Geoffrey Mack	Brenton Everson
Ginny & Mike Mazzuca	Joseph
Lucille & Al Reifman	Elizabeth (Betsy)
Lise & Jon Valenta	Troy

March 2011 Anniversaries

Colleen Boskin	Patrick Elasik
Rosanne & Jack Carney	Tracy Daniel
Gail & Mark Garfinkle	Harris
Margaret & Jack Gelin	Martha
Karen Brinkman & Fred Johnsen	Katherine
Chris & Terry King	Terry
Dave Nelson	Claire
Lisa Rushton & Charley Pereira	Savannah
Doris & Carl Sensabaugh	Tammy
Marlem & Alex Stein	Claudia
Linda Vasquez	Sonya

Please send changes of address or email to:

Potomac MD Compassionate Friends

c/o Nancy Frank, Co-Leader

3205 Kilkenny Street

Silver Spring, MD 20904

Inquiry line: 301-776-8500

