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# The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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## 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](http://WWW.TCFPotomacMD.com)

Winter 2015

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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)

**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**



*"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together"*  
Vesta M. Kelly

## Letter from the Editor

So here we are at another beginning to another year. The average person makes a few New Year's resolutions, and generally by the end of January, abandons all of them. But we are not the average person. We are special. We are bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. Some of us are so broken in spirit, feeling the pieces of our hearts can never be put back together.

In this time of transition to another year ahead, it seems a good time to reflect on our losses and our hopes. Bah humbug you might be thinking, what is there to be hopeful about? Without our loved ones what is supposed to even pass as hope? There are no easy answers, no quick fixes, no one size fits all, and certainly no going back to happier days. So what is there for us in this new year?

I think the answer is – anything you want for yourself. Believe me, I don't say this glibly. In the past 5 ½ years, I lost my 25 year old daughter, Kira, and my younger brother, Maurice. I have an almost 94 year old mother with 99.99% dementia who could die at anytime. The only family I have left is my son. So I look in the mirror (I try not to look too closely especially first thing in the morning) and ask myself... what am I going to do today? If I come up with something, my next question is... why bother?

I have answers to my questions. I go to an art class, I volunteer with an organization nearby, I have close contact with dear friends, and I have all of you. As to why do I bother, that isn't hard to answer. I'm still here, alive, relatively healthy and I feel strongly I owe it to myself to keep keeping on.

Keeping on doesn't take an iota of grief away from the ones I love and lost. My activities reinforce the idea life is still worth living, despite my grief. What I do is for me, so I can keep living and thereby keep remembering and loving my child and my brother.

I can't tell anyone else what they ought to be doing, how they ought to deal with their grief, or how to fill the long hours and endless years ahead. All I can say is I feel lucky to have had loving people in my life and, just as importantly, I still have more!

Despite our losses, and some of us have lost more than one child, a spouse, a sibling, a grandchild, a parent. I would venture to say there must still be at least one person still in your life who means something to you, and you to them.

So, in this new year, when we ask what can be in store for us and why bother, I say...reach out to even just one person, extend a hand, offer a hug, tell someone you love them. I am sure it will come right back to you. Just like those endless chain emails that go round and round, so does love.



# 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Candle Lighting

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, the Potomac Chapter held its annual Candle Lighting Ceremony. It was the Chapter's 15<sup>th</sup>, my 6<sup>th</sup>. As Chapter leader, I was anxious to have all the pieces of the evening mesh together and be an important and heartfelt experience for all who attended. From the comments I received after the speaker and candlelighting, I felt it was a success. Our Steering Committee did a wonderful job of planning and carrying out all the aspects of the evening, from choosing the speaker, the song, the music, the poem and the food. They arrived hours before the start time to set up tables, chairs, pick up the food, and have a dress rehearsal. The committee works tirelessly throughout the year to ensure the chapter runs smoothly. With one year now behind me as Chapter Leader, I can say with some authority, our committee is outstanding. Their continued dedication to the Potomac Chapter is what keeps us going from year to year. The level of commitment, their creativeness, the willingness to do whatever it takes to run the chapter deserves a huge thank you from each of us.

I also want to take this opportunity to offer a special thanks to our speaker, Glen Lord. The feedback I personally heard, and the line of people he had afterwards, showed his words impacted each of us in a most profound way. Glen has also graciously given his permission for me to include his talk in this newsletter. All his work is copyrighted, so please do not use it anywhere else. You may also find his website The Grief Toolbox (copyright) a helpful and inspiring place to go to.

## The Candle on the Mantel

By Glen Lord

Tonight might be your first Candle Lighting or you may have been to so many that you cannot remember them all. Either was for me every one has been and is special. I have been where I had no hope and I have been to ones where I was full of hope.

My son Noah died at four and ½ years old on June 14 1999 from complications if a tonsillectomy. He was my first born and at the time my only son, my future and my joy and on that day my hope, my joy and my future were taken away.

I had no idea what to do, I had never truly learned how to grieve or even what grief real was. I had experienced death before but what it had taught me did not help.

When I was about 12 my grandmother on my father's side died and I found out by answering the phone being asked when the funeral was.

When I was about 18 my other grandmother died, in many ways she was a mother to me, as she had lived with me my entire life. I did not even go to her funeral, she is buried at Arlington Cemetery, only went to her grave years later.

My family did not talk about death or have the dead in any way as part of our lives. All I had ever seen and all that I had ever learned about grief was to avoid and deny it. My son was dead and I knew this would not work, the darkness surrounded me and I had no hope.

That first year I went to my first candle

lighting. I was so full of pain and desperate for anything. We lit our candles and passed the light around and for the first time since Noah died as I held tight to that candle I felt hope, and saw it in the flame of that one small candle, hope.

When it came to put it out I used my fingers I wanted to feel the pain, I wanted to take the flame with me, I wanted the hope in me. I felt closer to my son than I had since his death. It hurt and it was beautiful.

Shortly after the candle lighting with the Holidays approaching I knew I would do what I had always done. Every year of my life except the year Tanya, my wife was pregnant with Noah, I have been at my parent's home. I was so conflicted, I did not know how I could possibly do the holidays without including Noah. I was engulfed by the darkness.

This first holiday was a disaster. No one but my wife and I acknowledged our son, we literally sat in the dark and cried. We ended up leaving earlier than we planned.

We returned home and I knew I was done living grief the way I learned. We purchased a big candle and placed it on the mantel. We kept it or its replacement lit all the way to January 26<sup>th</sup>, his birthday. I cried but there was hope in that flame. There was more than one night when I would sit and stare at the candle only to wake in the same chair after only a few hours of fitful sleep.

I dreaded the second candle lighting, and yet at the same time looked forward to it. It was my time to sit publicly with my son along with so many people who understood, I knew that this second year must be different many people shared their

reality of what they had done and what their fears were it was hopeful to see so many others understand.

I knew I had to reconcile how to include Noah in my holiday and yet deal with my family that did not know how. That candle had been the symbol of my hope and I wanted to share that hope.

The second year I brought my Compassionate Friend's candle to my parents home, before anything started Tanya and I got up, spoke his name, Noah, and lit the candle. We set it on the mantel, my mother commented on the candle, so did my dad. I told them it was Noah's candle and to my surprise they teared up and we all cried. Noah was spoken of for the first time and it was good. The holidays that year were hard and they were painful but Noah was a clear part of them.

The third holiday I showed up at my parent's home and to my shock, there with the decorations was a candle already lit. My mom said "I hope it was ok, I lit the candle before you arrived. Was it OK?" It was beautiful. The love of that gesture lit the room.

I also noticed hanging on the mantel was a stocking with his name on it and a journal in it. My mom told me this was so every year we could all share a memory of him and it would grow and he would always be a part of our lives. He would be known by those who would never meet him. I was full of pain and also full of hope. An impossible to understand paradox except by those who know it.

The fourth year without my son the candle on the mantel was again lit for his birthday, for his anniversary, or any time I need an outward representation of hope. The hope

had begun to spark my heart, not only in the flame of the candle. That year I looked forward to the tears as well and the hope of the candle lighting, the missing him yet the realization that he is with me all the time.

My family's holidays are now full of signs of him, we not only speak of dead, we include them in all we do. The light of the candle on the mantel has transformed an entire family, we now have grief shared, not denied. That candle now sits permanently on the mantel.

I have been bereaved for a long time. This is my 15<sup>th</sup> candle lighting and over those years the tradition of the candle has grown. My family has also grown, I now have two other sons who, although they have never physically been in the same room as Noah, they know him as a brother. My sister in law and nieces that have never experienced the brilliance of his smile know the of the joy that a 4 and ½ year old was so full of.

In 2007, my wife's mother Gretchen, died and we began to light the candle in Noah's and her name. In 2008 my sister in law's father died and we lit the candle in the memory of their lives. The next year a cousin of mine died and we began to light the candle in the realization that they were all still with us and that they belonged in a place of prominence in our lives.

Hope has continued to return. What was once a candle I fell asleep to that first birthday without him, has become a flame that rises up in me. It no longer only burns on a mantel but burns brighter, stronger and forever in my heart. I live daily with the pain of missing him and yet I live with the paradox of hope, knowing he is always with me.

No matter where you are on your grief

journey, may you find hope, if not your own hope, then hope from the communal flame of your Compassionate Friends that we will bring to the surface in the next few minutes, the one that burns in all of us.

We will have to extinguish the flame from the candle we pass, however, just as the candle on the mantel sits there as a permanent part of my life, the flame of hope in our hearts is fueled by Love and is never extinguished.

Love lives on. Love never dies.



## Ode to Pamela Sue

After 37 years of being man and wife  
A brain tumor took our daughter's life  
We then learned about three grief groups where  
Bereaved parents were allowed to mourn and care

Arlington TCF, Burke-Springfield and Bethesda, too  
These Compassionate Friends showed us what to do  
We Co-led Arlington for almost a year  
And then started Potomac with never a fear

Meanwhile four of us founded a Brain Tumor Run  
Researching a cure where there was none  
The success of this race led us to share  
Our ideas with TCF's directors in Portland fair

So the We NEED NOT WALK ALONE concept began  
Culminating every summer conference that TCF ran  
Thousands now walk together hand in hand  
To spread our legacy throughout the land

As the years have gone by we continue to give  
Realizing to help is to heal and let us all live  
For once grief begins it never quite ends  
That's why we cherish The Compassionate Friends

Written in memory of Pamela Sue Chaiken  
January 17,1964 to September 29, 1995  
by Sandra & Lionel Chaiken  
Founding members of Potomac Chapter

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

### Picture Buttons

The Steering Committee has decided to purchase a button making machine. For our April meeting, we will have a Button Making event. We will need a photo of your child(ren), sibling or grandchild about 2-3 inches in size. There will be no charge for the buttons. We will likely place a limit of 3 buttons to a family. More details will follow in the next few chapter meetings.

### The Sibling Group

The TCF Adult (18+) sibling group will be meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month. Our meetings will be 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](mailto: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](mailto:Compassionate-Friends-Potomac@googlegroups.com)

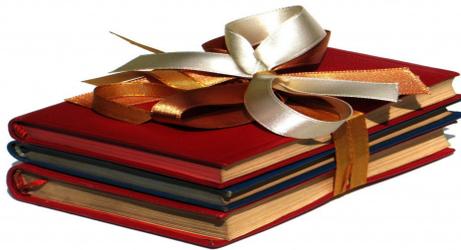
## Newsletter Contributions

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](mailto: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.

**\*\*\*Reminder\*\*\***

TCF Potomac will not meet if Montgomery County Schools are closed due to inclement weather.

# LOVE GIFTS

Phyliss Magram	Alan Belzer
Susan & Carl Johnson	Michael
Miscellaneous Donations	Gabrielle Sanda
Halley Dunn	Jacob
JoAnn Gellman	Julia & Will
Barbara & Barry Gordon	Jonathan Blank
Rita & Walter Pancik	Bruce Jay Leibowitz
Torie & Michael Plowden	Michael Shane
Lilyan & Jerry Heupel	Jerry & Robbie
Adrienne & Gene Fisher	Elyce & Wade
Micki & Irv Koniak	Lesley Koniak Garelik
Larry Bloom	Kira
Colleen Baskin	Patrick Elasik
Millie Rumerman	Kira , Andrea & Alan
Ellen & Jim Wilner	Scott Friedel
Mitzi & Ed Sereno	Andrea



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



November 2014

Stephetra & Daniel Anyaibe  
Janet Casey  
JoAnn Gellman  
Trish & Tony Glowacki  
Peggy & Ainsley Gordon  
Beth Hilliard  
Micki & Irv Koniak  
Janet & Charles Pacholkin  
Joan Uhlig  
Joece & Matt Yuen

Naiyah  
Marianne  
Julia  
Charles  
Ainsley III  
Jeanette  
Lesley Garelick  
Charles  
Jason  
Michael

## December 2014

Adrienne & Gene Fisher  
Sandra Fucigna  
Rosemarie Mahmood  
Mary & German Nader  
Joah Uhlig

Wade  
David  
Amanda  
Carolyn  
Chris

## January 2015

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

Pamela Sue  
Jeremy  
Bruce Liebowitz  
Samuel



Since my house burned down  
I now own a better view of the rising moon

Masahide