



Copyright TCF Potomac 2024

The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies



TCF of Potomac, MD Newsletter Quarter 1: January, February, March 2024

We meet the first Thursday of the month. Meetings begin at 7:00 PM

Potomac Presbyterian Church
10301 River Road
Potomac, MD 20854
www.TCFPotomacMD.com



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, grandchild 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 National

48660 Pontiac Trail
#930808
Wixom, MI 48393
877-969-0019



Leaders	Danny Norris Marilyn Schuman	New Members	George & Barbara Beall Lilyan Heupel
Co-Leaders	Nancy Frank Rob Goor	Librarian	Marilyn Schuman
Treasurer	Marc Smith	Web Page	Barbara & George Beall
Newsletter	Marilyn Schuman	Facilitators	Nancy Frank Rob Goor Danny Norris
Outreach	Mitzi Sereno	Steering Committee: all of the above + Daryl Thornton, Vickie Smith, Katherine Bloom and Mary Mandeville	

A Message From Your Chapter Leaders



As we are now in the first Quarter of a new year, it is our pride and joy to celebrate the success of our chapter's Candle Lighting Event in December. It is with deep, heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our veteran steering committee, who guided and graciously helped us every step of the way, with smiles, suggestions, and very real hands-on energy, both before, during and after the event, from planning to set-up to clean up.



Thanks to Mitzi Sereno, (above, far right) for resurrecting and directing the tradition of the 5 Special Candles, which went the way of so many things during the pandemic. She organized the beloved ritual and reintroduced it to those gathered. The candles were described and lit, as per tradition, by (right to left) Nancy Frank, Tina Mbida, Marge and Dan Druckman, Vickie and Marc Smith, and (behind) Rich and Marcie Leotta (alas, Marcie is hidden behind Vickie). This was a special honor for everyone involved.

Appreciation also goes to our guest speaker, Barbara Hopkinson, below right, who spoke about "Resilience in the Face of Loss," inspiring many of our members, as they have shared with us. Please visit her site, www.AButterflysJourney.org to learn more about this inspirational woman.



Thanks, also, to our most talented chapter musician/member, Ellen Ensel, left, who played a magnificent and haunting alto flute as members entered the room, and again, in a most moving way, at the very end of our program.

The only serious disappointment of the evening was when our guests of honor, Sandra & Stephanie Chaiken couldn't get their garage door open, because it was stuck shut. They couldn't get any repair people to help, and they live up in northern Maryland, so we couldn't "run up" to get them. Please see their story inside this issue.



Marilyn & Danny

How is TCF Like A Chapter from Winnie the Pooh?

"...A Bear Wedged In great Tightness"

From the opening remarks of Richard Edler
1996 TCF National Conference



In a tape called, "To Touch a Grieving Heart" there is a wonderful little reminder of the "Winnie the Pooh" story by A.A. Milne. The story is that Winnie goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey. Coming out of Rabbit's hole, he gets stuck tight – so tight he can't even sigh. He asks his friends to stay with him, read him a story, and offer words of comfort . . . and thus to help "a bear wedged in great tightness."

Notice that Pooh does not ask to be pulled out of the hole, he asks only for company so he is not alone. I think grief is like being "a bear wedged in great tightness." And while we cannot make the grief go away for each other, The Compassionate Friends starts and stops with the core idea that we will be there for each other; that **"We Need Not Walk Alone."**



*Where grief is still very fresh,
the most important resolution made
may be the dedication to
SURVIVE EACH DAY*

Bruce H. Conley

Self Help

For many of us, the monthly meeting of our Compassionate Friends group is the only real healing time we give to ourselves. Helping ourselves on a daily basis is critical to our journey in the grieving process.

Many of us find solace in books. Others find it in movies, music, time with friends, meditation, or intense spiritual conviction. If you haven't already done so, you might want to think about starting, perhaps each day, to take some time to center yourself, to find a place of peace.

If you haven't already done so, you might want to start with a quiet time of reflection and search your soul for the key to your own solace. There will still be bad, even terrible days. The effort to help ourselves begins with knowing ourselves and finding the unique activity that soothes our broken hearts for just a little while.

By Annette Mennen Baldwin
TCF Katy, Texas

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 for checks made out to TCF Potomac Chapter. **Donations may be also be sent via Zelle to Marcsmitholney@gmail.com**

You may also mail **LOVE GIFTS** to:
Marc Smith
4241 Sandcastle Lane
Olney, MD 20832



Speaking of Love Gifts

They can also be donated in the form of a gift to the chapter or the members. Thanks to **Mitzi Sereno** for sharing her love of colorful butterflies by buying these lovely mementos for every member to take home from Candle Lighting as a reminder of the meaningful night. They will also serve as a daily visual of our memories.

Why are Love Gift Donations Important?

We are solely dependent on donations to cover all of our expenses, from paying the church, refreshments for meetings, the speaker for Candle Lighting, our Web page, and all the other expenses needed to keep the chapter running smoothly and comfortably for everyone.

Thank
You

Thanks, first, to our incredible treasurer, Marc Smith, for all the time and work he donates to the chapter to take care of all our funds, both donations and expenses, in a friendly and timely manner.

Marc was thrilled to report that last quarter love gift donations was the largest he has seen in a long time. In 2022, we received 21 Love Gift donations for the year. In 2023, we received 20 Love Gifts, just for the last quarter!



So a big thanks to so many of you who shared a Love Gift with the chapter, to help us keep things running smoothly and enabling us to keep you all comfortable when we are together.

Love Gift Donations – Quarter 4, 2023

	From:	In Loving Memory of:
<u>October:</u>	Tina Mbatia	Stephen Mbatia
	Barbara Kanfee	Joey (son) & Jacob (husband)
	Susan & Bill Reed	Kate Reed
	Danny & Marilyn Norris	Kimberly Dawn Norris
	Marj & Dan Druckman	Kathy Lee Druckman Berggren
	George & Barbara Beall	Barbara Lynn Beall
	Sue Jacobson	Becca Pardo
	Ed & Mitzi Sereno	Andrea Katherine Sereno
<u>November:</u>	Monica Lamont	Daniel Tyo
	Marie Vilgos	Christine Vilgos-Mitchell
	Cheryl Kurss	Julia Rebecca Ruda
	Lilyhan & Jerry Heupel, Jr.	Robbie & Jerry Heupel, III
	Rich & Marcie Leotta	Noah Leotta
	Nilda Colgrove	Jesse Brian Colgrove
<u>December:</u>	Meaghan & Carlos Diez	Hailey Oristian
	Judy & Nader Nader	Benjamin Kamil Nader
	Barbara Hopkinson	Brent, Brad & Robbie
	Walter & Rita Pancik	Bruce Jay Leibowitz
	Rob Goor & Linda Tebelman	Andrew Benjamin Goor
	Ed & Mitzi Sereno	Andrea Katherine Sereno

thank
you



2024 Angel*versaries

Our Children Remembered

January

Cindy Allen	Jack Bostian
Anita & Gary Fields	Adam Scott Fields
Beverly Guerra	Randall
Lynn & Fred Lee	Nicole Lee
Curtis Ollayos & Christine Haellauer	Macklin
Sanjay Pingali & Shiho Pingali	Sanula Pingali
Marion M Webster & David F	Christie Adair Kefauver

February

Atsuko & Robert Blevins	Vivian
Vital Correia & Bernadette Rousseau	Angelina Correia
Morvarid & Marc Franchi	Elienne Franchi
Kathleen & John Kennedy	Molly
Mary Ann McCleary	Naomi Seibert
Donna & Richard Mirsky	Matthew
Ben & Shil Tingo	Sid



March

Colleen Boskin	Patrick Michael Elasik
Susan & Chip Cameron	Devon Stewart
Mike & Karen Cohen	Harris Cohen
Blanco & Daniel Cotlear	Rafael
Cheryl Kurss	Julia Rude
Samantha & Don Nelson	Quinn
Kathleen Pang	Kimberly Pang
Liz Sheridan	Michael
Susan & Walter St. Aubin	Marc
Reinaldo & Helen Thompson	Christian Thompson



Instead of simply sharing the list above, with just the parents' and the children's names, going forward, **we invite you to donate a love gift and dedicate it to your child**, or any loved one with a simple brief message. A dedication is strictly voluntary. A few examples below:

Carol & George F. "In memory of John & Colby F."

Randall & Charlotte O. "In Memory of Keith O. 7/3/73 – 11/2/2001"

Elizabeth C. "To my Beloved son, Billy Joe C. I walk the road where I live now and think of you above me in the sky. I do talk to you often."

NOTE FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR: If any of the information above is not accurate or the way you want it displayed, (or worse, totally missing your child), **please let me know** at [Note2Mar@yahoo.com](mailto>Note2Mar@yahoo.com), and, please put TCF in the message title. Thank you. Marilyn Schuman, Editor, Kimberly's Mom

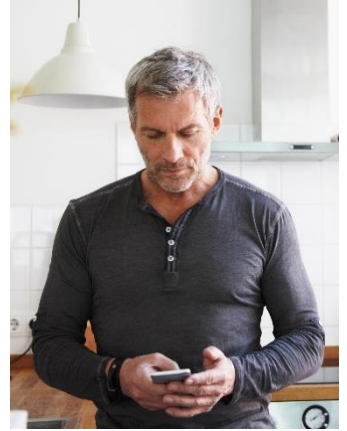
TELEPHONE FRIENDS

We have all experienced the pain of having a child die. We understand, care and would like to hear from you. **If you are a “seasoned griever” and would like to help support our “newer” members as they process and try to deal with their grief when they are not at a meeting, but need to talk with someone who “totally understands,” you can be a tremendous source of support.**

If a newer member is struggling with overwhelming grief, and needs to talk to someone, we would like to be able to offer them a list of chapter members who are further along in their grief journey, and who would be willing to talk, one-on-one, to listen, and to share their own experience dealing with incredible grief when it overwhelms.

If you are interested in becoming a “telephone friend,” please give Danny a call at 508-577-9134 so we can put you on the list. We would like to provide your name, your child’s name, age when they died, and cause of death, so newer members can seek out veteran members whose child may have died from the same or a similar cause. These parents often find they have even more in common.

You will NOT be “on call” 24/7. We will limit hours from 9am – 9pm, unless you need to have them more limited, and you can specify what days and times work for you.



For My Compassionate Friends

How is it that I know you?
How'd you get into my life?
Sometimes when I look at you,
It cuts me like a knife.
I do not want to know you,
I don't want to cross that line.
Let's both go back into the past,
When everything was fine.
You've held me and you've hugged me,
And dried a tear or two,
Yet, you're practically a stranger,
Why do you do the things you do?
Of course, I know the reason,
We are in this Club we're in,
And why we hold on to each other
Like we are long-lost kin.
For us to know each other,
We had to lose a kid.
I wish I'd never met you,
But I'm so thankful that I did.

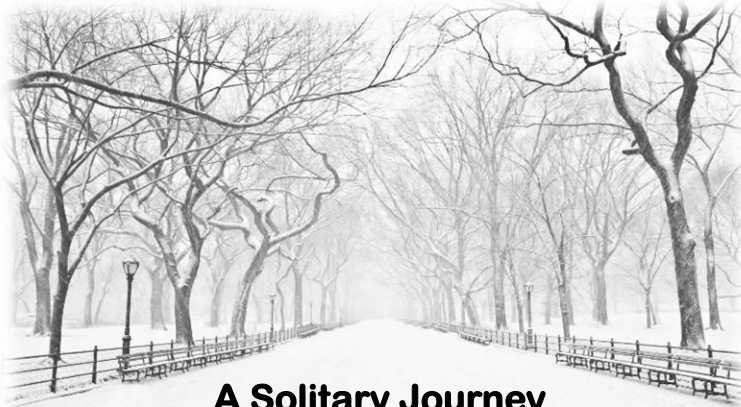
Marilyn Rollins



How I Found Hope . . .

People are always asking me why are we still attending meetings, and my answer is always because it helps me survive. Recently I was asked why do you attend “those meetings” and my answer was, “because it keeps my boys alive.....That's what TCF does for me.”

**Jacque Edwards-Mitchell,
Manhattan, NY Chapter**



A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary Journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you love has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person who was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

Helen Steiner Rice

**Only If You Want to:
On Your Child's Birthday Month**

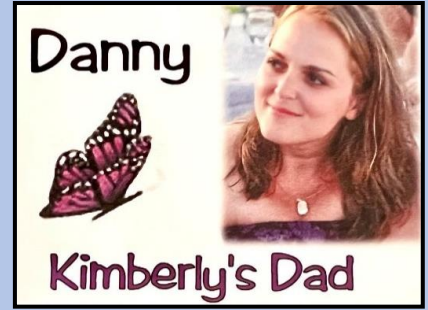
You are invited to share their memory by bringing their favorite dessert to share on our snack table. If you choose to participate, we invite you to make a sign, (large enough to be easily read) sharing your child's name, birthday, and what favorite dessert you're sharing in their honor.



The Compassionate Friends is an international, non-profit, peer support organization offering friendship, understanding, grief education and HOPE for the future to all families who are grieving the death of a child at any age from any cause including miscarriage, stillbirth, infant and adult. We are not counselors or therapists. We are people who have journeyed (in varying degrees) the same road you are now traveling.

TWO FREE OFFERS!

(and you can have both!)



A Pin-on Photo Button
You can wear it anywhere

A Personalized Clip-on Nametag
You can wear it to our meetings

For the Buttons

1. Print out a square photo of your child – *a little larger* than 3"x 3".
2. Please use plain white printer paper, not photo paper. (The buttons are 3" in diameter, so the photo should be a tiny bit bigger.)
3. Cut the photo out so it is has a 1/4 inch white margin on all sides.
4. Please bring your 3 1/2" x 3 1/2" square paper with the photo to a meeting with your name and your child's name on the back.

For the Clip-on Nametags

Email the photo in digital form to Note2mar@yahoo.com and please put "Clip-on nametag" in the subject line. The size of the photo doesn't matter, as it will be digital.

*Please include your name, and what you want on the bottom line.

**The TCF
Vision:**

**That everyone who needs us
will find us;**



**And everyone who finds us
will be helped**

2017 The Compassionate Friends

This is YOUR chapter newsletter.



You are invited to submit any article, poem or link you think the members of our special group would appreciate. Please provide the name of the poet or author.

If you write for therapy, to help you process your grief, or to allow the memory of your child to flow onto the pages of a story, poem or heartfelt description, please feel free to submit your writings to Marilyn at note2mar@yahoo.com. (Please put "TCF" as part of your subject line. We would love to publish words from your heart, to help us get to know you and your child better.

A Note to Our New Members

Attending your first Compassionate Friends meeting can be a frightening experience. Bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents are vulnerable, lost, heartbroken and fearful of the unknown. Please remember, each of us was in this same place not so long ago. Bring a friend/partner for support to your first few meetings. We are here for you, the newly bereaved. We suggest that you attend at least three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will help you on your grief journey. You need not walk alone.



A Request of Our Longer-Term Members

Take a moment of your time today to think back to the beginning of your grief journey. It can be difficult for some even to recall the events surrounding your loved one's death, let alone remember your first TCF meeting. Yet you came, and when you arrived or called, a sweet voice soothed your shattered nerves, talked with you, welcoming you and explaining the chapter meetings so you would know what to expect. Someone was there for you. Many "established bereaved" were ready to give you a hug, dry your tears, hold your hand and support you as you said your loved one's name for the first time in an open group setting. There was a gentleness and kinship in the room that you found nowhere else in the world.

Your unique perspective is needed by the many newly bereaved who enter our meetings each month for the first few times. Each new member deserves a gentle welcome, a few kindred souls upon whom they can rely. Trust is a sacred bond that gets us through the first meeting and perhaps the second and third meeting as well.

Please remember who you were and all that you have become since joining us at The Compassionate Friends. If you can find it in your heart to give back to those who need the security of our group now, please return for some meetings, for the gift of hope is such a precious treasure.

Thanks to the Central Iowa Chapter
Of TCF for this perspective.



Grief Awareness

by David Kessler at grief.com

We live in a grief-illiterate society. Because people so seldom share their true experience of grief, we don't really know what to expect. Grief Awareness is so important.

What no one tells us about grief:

- Grief is isolating
- There are so many secondary losses
- The pain of grief can hit unexpectedly
- Grief is exhausting
- We may experience many feelings in one day
- Grief lasts longer than expected
- Grief profoundly changes us
- Grief brain is real
- You may lose your patience
- There may also be physical issues
- Grief is disorienting
- Grief is transformative

I would tell anybody in grief to
be kind and gentle to themselves

and to NOT COMPARE their journey
to the time and distance traveled
by others grieving the same loss.

There is hope; it may come as the
slightest pin hole of light in the darkness of places,
but *hope is there and it will find you.*

Kris Munsch, Blake's dad
The Compassionate Friends

I hope that this is helpful to you. Each of us will have a unique experience with grief. But seeing these threads of commonalities and connecting with one another can help us feel connected and less isolated in our grief. Grieving is a natural, and essential human experience. And yet, navigating the pain and changes of grief can be overwhelming.

I hope that you will remember to be gentle with yourself.



A Story that Must Be Shared

If you live near, or visit Rio in Gaithersburg, you may have seen this charming shop on the short street between Copper Canyon and the movie theaters. It is a lovely space where local artists display and sell their work. I had a little spare time

one day recently, so I allowed myself to be drawn in for a short browse. This beautiful plate caught my eye as soon as I walked in. The butterflies spoke to me, but when I picked it up, I saw that there were tiny sparkles in the paint, and I was even more delighted. I turned it over and saw that it was a bit too pricey for me. One of the owners heard me and came over to talk with me.

I told her that I was co-leader of a support group for bereaved parents, and she responded with, "I am so sorry. Butterflies are very special to all of you, aren't they?" I nodded yes and told her about one of our newer parents who had been connected to someone in my family, and how glad I was that they had found our TCF chapter. I told her the story of how those parents lost their child. She took the plate and said, "Let me see what I can do."

I thought she might be asking the other owner if she could give me a discount. A few minutes later, she came back with the plate wrapped in tissue paper, in a gift bag, tied up with a ribbon, and said, "Here. Please give this to them as a gift from us." I was so touched, I hugged her and thanked her.

If you are in Rio any time **after mid-late March**, please look for them in their new location closer to Target.

**It seems you don't have to lose a child to be "a compassionate friend."
These caring women deserve our business.**

Marilyn Schuman, co-leader
Kimberly's Mom

How I Found Hope . . .

Laughter was a big part of my life prior to May of 1995. However, I was taken aback when I attended my first TCF meeting (a month after Nina's Death) to walk through the doors and hear the laughter of other bereaved parents; I thought surely I must be in the wrong room! I just knew I'd never laugh again; didn't they love their children as much as I loved Nina? I almost left before the meeting started. But I gave it a chance and quickly came to learn that these same parents, through attending meetings and meeting new friends there symbolized HOPE personified. I knew that if they were able to laugh again, so would I. And just knowing that grief and joy would eventually coexist was the ultimate hope for me.

**Cathy Seehuetter, Nina's mom & Chris' bonus mom
TCF of St. Paul, MN Chapter**

Announcements

Our February meeting will be **Thursday, February 1st**

Our March meeting will be **Thursday, March 7th**

Our April meeting will be **Thursday, April 4th**

If the weather is an issue on our meeting night, please listen to local news on TV or radio. **If school activities are cancelled, so is our meeting,** and we will update that on our website: www.tcfPotomacMd.com **and we will send out an email to update everyone.**

If you are newly bereaved, please contact:
Barbara & George Beall
Oldedish@starpower.net
301-253-8740

♥ The Sibling Group ♥

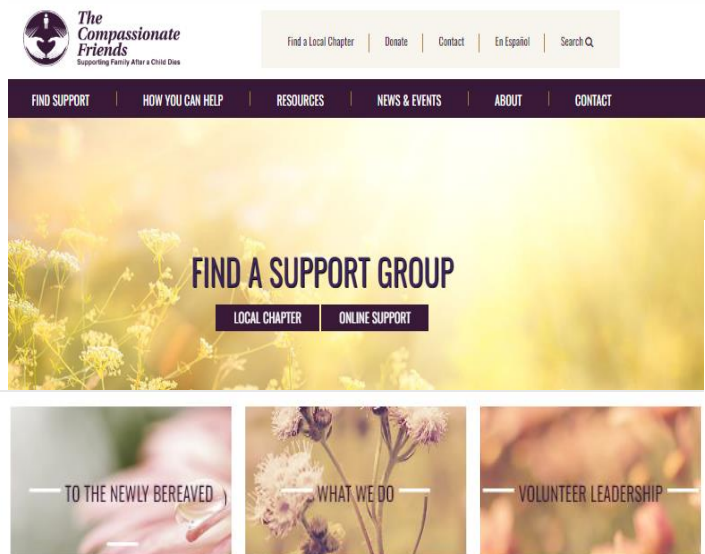
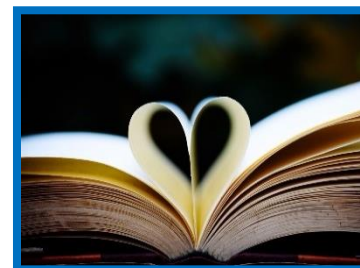
The TCF Adult (18+) sibling group meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00 PM at TGI Fridays in Rockville. The address is: 12147 Rockville Pike, in the Pike Shopping Center (Twinbrook/Rockville area). 301-231-9048

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

Our Chapter Library

The Potomac Chapter has an extensive library which includes books written by people who have lost a child or sibling. The books are free and available for 3 months at a time to our members. Please look for the book tables, with thanks to Lilyan Heupel, who brings the entire collection (!) every month.



The TCF National Web Page

Please visit this great resource at
Compassionatefriends.org

I am Joy

I am joy.
I once was easy to know.
A hug from your child, a ride to
school
or a birthday party and I was there.
I was easy.
I was obvious.
I lived with you, brought you a
smile
and a happy heart.

And then your child died
and I was buried under the
avalanche
of your grief and sorrow.
I was beaten down and lost.
You may think I had died too.

But I am not dead.

I am resting gently in your heart
and I am patient.
I will wait for you to feel me again.
I will wait for you forever.
You will find me in the life of your
child.

I will be in your memories and I will
lighten your heart.

Do not forget me, for I have not
forgotten you.

I will wait for your healing heart to
find me.

And you will be glad
Where once I was easy and at your
fingertips,

You must now work to find me.

You must grieve and heal and
grieve and heal

And search for me, fight for me.

If you do your work, I will come
back to you.

You will find me in the life
of your child.

I will be in your memories and I will
lighten your heart.

Do not forget me, for I have not
forgotten you.

I will wait for your healing heart to
find me.

And you will be glad.

Robert Anderson 2006
TCF, Queensland



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Our Guests of Honor (not) at Candle Lighting: Sandra and Stephanie Chaiken



Left to right: **Sandra, Stephanie**, Lionel, and Pamela Chaiken

Please see the story of their challenge (that night) at the bottom of the front page. We will do our best to have them visit again next December at our 2024 Candle Lighting Celebration, so you can meet them, and they can meet you.

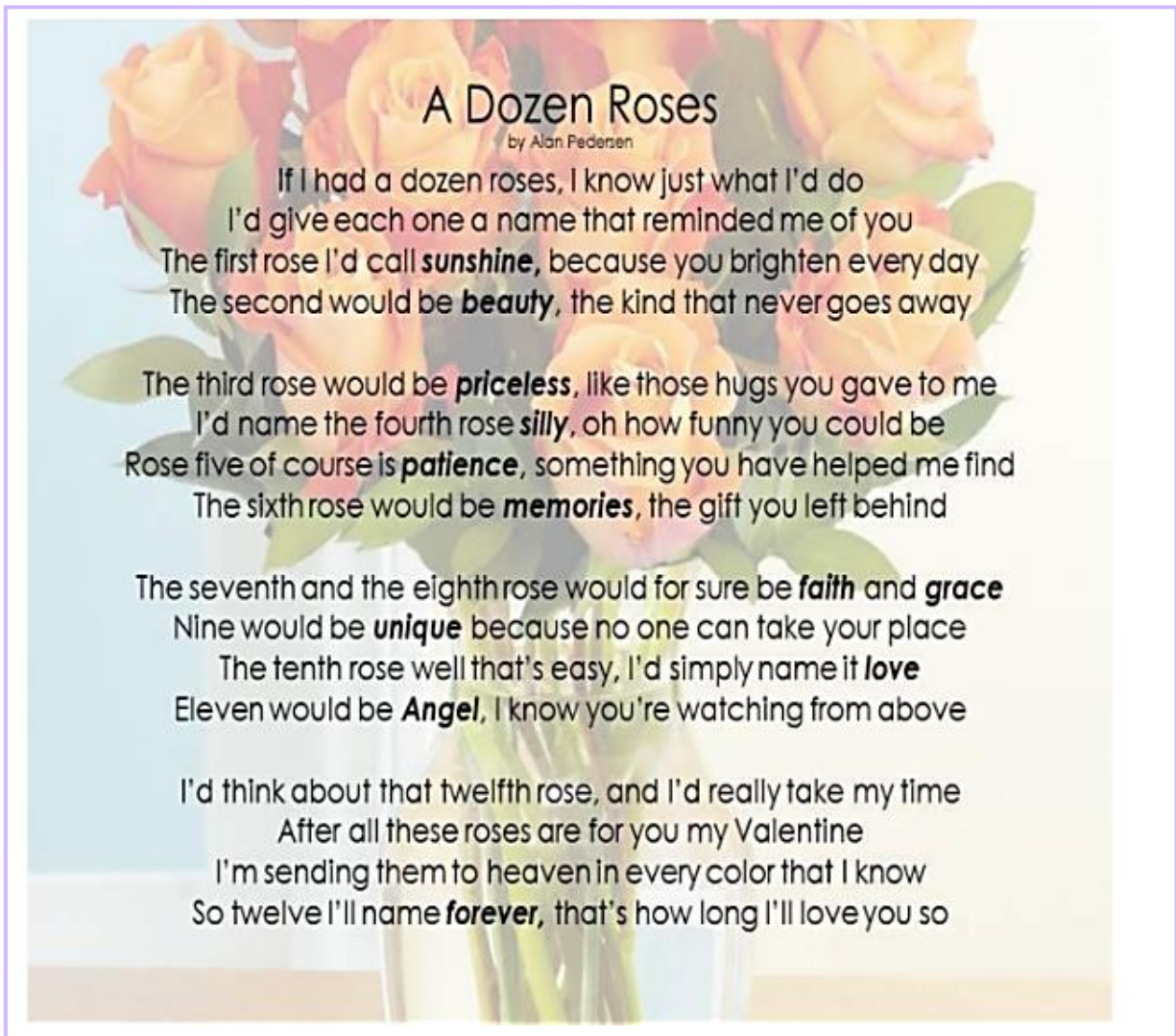


Pamela Sue Chaiken

The beautiful family portrait, above, was taken before they lost their beloved daughter and sister, Pamela, to a brain tumor, after a 13-year battle.

The family was struggling to cope with the pain and grief of their loss when Sandra stumbled upon an item written by Ann Landers about *The Compassionate Friends* in [The Washington Post](#). They attended many different groups in the area and saw there was a need for one in the Potomac area, so they learned from other chapters, then started our chapter, and **we are forever grateful.**

With the approach of February, we cannot deny the reality of
Valentine's Day,
which brings memories of our love
and reminders of our loss.



*Thanks and deep appreciation to Alan Pederson
for this heartfelt expression*