



The Compassionate Friends
Rochester Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Sept. / Oct. 2017 www.tcfrochester.org



As a 16-year member of Compassionate Friends I have been asked, "Why stay so long". There are a variety of reasons. I came in just a few weeks after my son Wyatt was killed. As many of us I was experiencing numbness, a blank stare, fear and tears. The only thing that I really recall was many giving out free hugs, kindness and a compassion I had not experienced since his death.

When the funeral took place, I remember trying to comfort others, trying to be so strong, and just wanting to be as close to my child as I could get. Then afterwards you think the world has stopped and everyone should be stopped and time itself should stop. But it doesn't. Life for others goes on. We are expected to go on. Somehow, we put one foot in front of the other. I don't think we give ourselves enough credit for even doing that.

Family dynamics change. I changed. Friends that I expected to understand were not there. But the one constant I found was the constant presence and understanding of my Compassionate Friends family. I think when I first joined I expected to get "fixed" and return to "normal". It took me a couple of years to realize that was never going to happen and for a time I resisted that. Finally, it occurred to me that by listening to the stories, forming friendships and observing the lives of longer termed members that my life was never going to be the same and that I wasn't going to get fixed. TCF members became my friends and were the only people that I wasn't afraid to share my innermost and scariest feelings with. It was safe. Where else could I share a birthday cake and remembrance and celebrate? Where else could I share my story and not be told, "you aren't over it yet"? Where else could I light a candle, shed a tear and not face being told, "there will be no more candle lighting or tears on a holiday"?

After about 6 years of attending TCF in Rochester it became time for a new journey in my life. I felt a call to start a chapter in Batavia. I had to step out of my safety zone, my deep introverted tendency and step out to ask for help and speak in front of others, make phone calls, beg for money. All to get a chapter going. There were some that said I couldn't do it. I think there was a spiritual intervention. I know we are not supposed to speak of God in TCF but speaking of spirituality is often an undercurrent in many meetings. Wyatt's death changed me. Not all for the bad but for some good. I think compassion became more important in my life and after receiving so much for so many years I now feel it is time to return some. I hate the fact that others share this journey, but it is a journey we can all do together. Our lives have all come from different places, economic status, education and work differences but our children's death is a common thread that binds us. I've seen it at TCF conferences, meetings and chance connections of others that have lost their child. They don't necessarily have to be members, but the common bond we share forever is established. Therefore, I continue to be a part of such a great organization and remain even when others have long left. I try to offer hope when there seems to be none and encourage not discourage the newly bereaved and all who continue this journey. It's correct, none of us will ever be the same, we will always have a hole in our heart, but we can go on and we will. Thank you to all members who have helped and continue to help form my journey.

Submitted by Pat Wheeler, Wyatt's forever mom
TCF, Rochester NY

Dear Newly Bereaved Parent By Angela Miller

This will likely be the hardest thing you'll ever do. *Survive* this. And eventually, maybe even thrive again.

At times it will feel virtually impossible. You'll wonder how a human being can survive such pain. You'll learn you know how to defy the impossible. You did it from the moment your child's heart stopped, and yours kept beating. You do it with every breath and step you take. You're doing it now. And now. And now.

Your fingernails will become bloodied from clawing your way from the depths of despair. Your spirit will grow weary from fighting to survive. Your eyes will cry more tears than you ever thought possible. Your arms will ache an ache for which there aren't words. For a *lifetime*.

Your heart will break into a million tiny pieces. You'll wonder how it will ever mend again.

But with every morsel of unspeakable pain, there is love. An abundance of love. A love so strong, so powerful, it will buoy you. You will not drown.

Others will say things that are intended to be helpful, but aren't. Take what is, leave what isn't.

Still, you'll meet others along the journey who will get it without ever saying a word. Kind souls who will breathe you back to life again. Love them.

Years down the road you'll tire of hearing the same advice and clichés, over and over again. Advice you don't want or need. Everyone will try to tell you how to best "fix" your broken heart. The trouble is, you don't need fixing.

There is no fix for this.

Eventually you'll learn how to carry the weight of this pain. At times it will crush you. At other times you'll learn how to shoulder the burden with newfound grit and grace. Either way you'll learn how to bend with the weight of it.

It will not break you. Not entirely.

And even if you don't believe in hope— not even a little— hope will light the way for you. At times you won't realize your path is lit. The darkness feels all consuming when you're in it. But know the light is there. Surrounding you now. And now. And now.

Know you're being guided, by all of us who have survived this impossible hell. You may not hear us, or see us, but we are with you. Beside you. Hand in hand, heart to heart. Always. Just like your child still is.

Above all else, know that no one can save you but yourself. You are the heroine/hero of this sad story. You are the one who gets to decide how, and if, you'll survive this. You are the one who will figure out a way to survive the sleepless nights, and the endless days. You are the one who will decide if and when you'll find a purpose again that means something to you. You are the one who will choose how you'll live with the pain. You are the one who will decide what you'll cling to, what will make your life worth living again. You, and only you, get to decide how you'll survive.

No one else can do this for you.

People will speak of "closure," of "moving on," of "getting over it," of grief coming to an end. Smile kindly, and know, anyone who says these things hasn't lived this thing called grief.

To lose a child is to lose the very heart and soul of you. It is overwhelmingly disorienting. It takes a long, long time to find yourself again. It takes a long time to grow new life around the chasm of such grave loss. It takes a long time to grow beauty from ashes.

There will always be a hole in your heart, the size and shape of your child. Your child is absolutely irreplaceable. Nothing will fill the void your child left. But your heart will grow bigger— beautifully bigger— around the empty space your child left behind.

The love and pain you carry for your precious child will be woven into every thread of your being. It will fuel you to do things you never dreamed you could do.

Eventually you'll figure out how to live for both of you. It will be beautiful, and it will be hard.

But, the love you two share will carry you through. You will spread this love everywhere you go.

Eventually you'll be able to see again. Eventually, you'll find your way again. Eventually, you'll realize you *survived*.

You found the strength + courage to live your life

**Shared by Mary Ann Dobbins
In Loving Memory of Granddaughter, Colleen Josephine Dobbins
TCF, Rochester NY**



Losing a child is like an experience you can't imagine or even want to think about. It's as if suddenly someone puts a huge Grand Piano in the middle of your small living room. You go into shock and can't imagine how to get around it. You can't. Eventually you somehow continue on moment by moment and step by step.

Today my step has stopped and my heart remembers all too well the events and the horrible cancer that took my daughter's life. Tomorrow, June 21st marks 10 yrs since she was taken and today it feels as if it were happening all over. Tomorrow will come and go and then I'll start to move forward again.

I love you Laura



Patricia Bradshaw

**Written the night before the 10th anniversary of the Remembrance Day for
her daughter ~ Laura Collins
TCF, Rochester NY**

Summer's End

September's arrival

Means one more year without you.
Some days it seems, like just yesterday.
Other days it seems like forever.
Our grief has dulled,
Not as sharp as before.
But it remains.
Our love has never lessened
It remains strong, and plentiful
We send you our love,
along with our prayers.

Love,
Mom and Dad

George Carafos
In loving memory of son, David George Carafos
TCF, Rochester NY



"Listening hearts hear Angels sing"

Uneasy Word

Hope is not an easy word for grievers
but we, more than most others,
need to understand
what hope can mean for us.

Hope means finding the strength
to live with grief.

Hope means nurturing with grace
the joy of remembrance.

Hope means embracing
with tenderness and pride
our own life
and the gifts left to us
By those we have lost.

Lifelink

Find in the dark of grief
the sunlit spaces.
Find in your sorrowed time
a moment's smile.
Find in the loneliness
Of your despairing
one warm and kindred mind,
one hand to touch
your most secluded feeling

~Find a friend.

The Poems of Sascha Wagner

Seeing...but not Seen



*Sometimes these odes are easy and the words just start to flow,
As the need to pen them to paper just grows and grows and grows,
Sometimes it is more difficult...the path a bit more adverse,
To find the words to soothe my soul through my Therapy in Verse,*

*As your remembrance day draws near...the third we've had to bear,
I found myself looking back to years one and two with which to compare,
To relate where we are today as to where we were back then,
I had to read those odes for perspective before picking up my pen,*

*That first year was exactly that...all the firsts without you here,
And at each and every first that year there were many, many tears,
So many trying times there were but there were some bright spots too,
For who among the Prattsburgh faithful could forget the legendary year of Forty-Two,*

*With the end of that wearisome first year we told ourselves the next would be more at ease,
That was naught but a dream for there were more trying times ahead sailing grief-riddled, stormy seas,
I wrote of my journey through grief's dark tempest...and breaking through it in the end,
To see sunny skies beyond that does its best to help my heart to mend,*

*And as I now sit here reflecting upon this third year past,
Pulling out those memories that in my head do last,
From your heavenly vantage point, my son, how would you describe this past year's time?
I think I'll take a crack at it using my own words of rhyme,*

*Dad, Mom, Christina and all those loved ones I left behind,
Worry not for me and let me try to ease your troubled minds,
For although your hearts are troubled since I left the world of man,
I know nothing but happiness since this new wondrous journey began,*

*This year started amazingly with your trip to Lily Dale,
And my opportunity to speak to you from beyond this mortal veil,
One thing that she told you was I am here and I can see,
To which I would have to say what else but a heartfelt Indeed!*

*I saw Christina's senior year...the sports, the play and all events were truly great,
I saw and Pomp & Circumstanced with her on her night to graduate,
You all swelled with pride as I witnessed her National Guard enlistment,
This Marine at heart stood by her side that day after journeying across the firmament,*

*I saw you and Mom help to start a TCF chapter closer to home,
To let those local families who've suffered loss know that they are not alone,
I see you every month welcome new members with open arms,
And how you wish the need preventable...that these families should know such harm,*

*I saw the hard work you put into preparing our old house for sale,
And I saw more hard work in moving to a new homestead that is over hill and over dale,
I saw it plainly in your eyes the ghosts of memories from that house that had been,
But worry not for I am with you still to observe your days again and again,*

*I see it when you witness those flying things and say "Hey Brandon... how you doin' today?"
I am that butterfly... the humming bird that appears just to brighten up your day,
I see my brother Jimmy as he and Nikki walk on down the road,
For I am that dragonfly that parallels his path to and from his earthly abode,*

*Down in Florida I see my sister Kayla's family from a point of view that might surprise,
Clinging to the wall as I observe through laughing lizard's eyes,
How much fun we had with her, Cory, Noah and the whole family,
And you better believe I was there and saw the birth of little Miss Every!*

*And finally I see my Mom each and every day as she does awaken,
And I notice her tread is heavier at times with each step that is taken,
As is the case with every mother whose child left this world too soon,
Oh if I could only take that grief and toss it out way past the moon,*

*If I could I'd tell her she can feel my touch in that gentle breeze upon her skin,
And tell her to close her eyes when the warm sun shines down and she'll see my smile again,
I wish she could feel the kisses I give her each good morning and good night,
And feel my arms around her when she cries... they hold her oh so tight,*

*I am here but not here... seeing but not seen,
And every now and again I drop by and pay a visit through a heartfelt dream,
For you and the whole family I stand sentry from my angelic perch,
Just know that I am with you though your eyes cannot see me when you search,*

*You might think that all this observing would have me spread out quite thin,
There are so many things I see I'm not quite sure where to begin,
So I think I'll just say it this way and to this you should agree,
I endeavor to see every limb on our grand old family tree,*

*I try to support them in my own way when I see that they are down,
I try to pick them up when I see they've fallen to the ground,
I know my power is limited... I cannot right all the wrongs that I see,
But I will always bear witness to my family living in this land of the free,*

*I know it may not seem I lived long enough to become truly wise,
But observing from this side brings true perception to these eyes,
I see the good and bad and all of that stuff that's in-between,
And now you know that I've been truly blessed by all that I have seen...*

Jim Lass

**In loving memory of son, Brandon Lass
TCF, Bath NY / TCF, Rochester NY**



Remembering Cathy...

On Friday October 21st, 2011, Catherine Spoto passed away. On that day The Compassionate Friends of Rochester lost a very dear friend and mentor. Those of you who knew Cathy know that she was the heart and soul of our organization. Many of us have known her for a very long time and some of us barely had a chance to get to know her. In every instance, everyone recognized the special gifts that she brought to our group.

Love Gifts



***Support for the meeting on June 27th was donated by
Pat Wheeler, in loving memory of son Wyatt Zuber***

***Support for the meeting on July 25th was donated by
Joe & Maureen Stuhler, in loving memory of son Joel C. Stuhler***

***Support for the meeting on August 8th was donated by
Pat & Sue Vitek, in loving memory of son Jefferson Patrick Vitek***

***Support for the meeting on August 22nd was donated by
Joe & Maureen Stuhler, in loving memory of Devin Donald Kusse***

Thank you to Jason & Christine Price for printing the newsletters via Paychex, Inc.

Thank you to Pat Bradshaw for always sharing her "Angel Roses" with all of us
in loving memory of her daughter, Laura Collins.



We want to share this support group information:

Face 2 Face Friendship Group, Rochester NY. face2facerochester.com Providing support & hope to families coping with miscarriage, stillbirth, & infant loss.

Healing after Loss to Addiction A bereavement support group focused on living and healing after loss related to drug use or overdose. Please call Lifetime Care for more information ... 585-475-8800.

Bereaved Parents. Bereavedparentsusa.org A national non-profit self-help group that offers support, understanding, compassion, and hope to bereaved parents, grandparents, & siblings. Shared by Pat Loomis.

Alive Alone. Alivealone.org. Support for now childless parents. Shared by National TCF.

“Healing the Grieving Heart” Web Radio Show. Compassionatefriends.org (left side of the home page, link to “Healing the Grieving Heart”). Live shows are at 11:00 am on Thursdays. The archived shows are available 24 hours per day.

What is the TCF Rochester Chapter Steering Committee?

It is a group who work to keep our Chapter ongoing for each other and for newly bereaved parents, grandparents & siblings.

We welcome anyone interested ...
please see Mary Ann Dobbins, Joe Stuhler, or Pat Wheeler

Support Compassionate Friends Rochester, Inc. when you shop at: smile.amazon.com
<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/16-1129742>

Pat Wheeler has some butterfly themed sweatshirts, t-shirts, and totes from the PA regional TCF Conference. \$15, \$10, \$10 respectively.
If you are interested, please see Pat.

Meeting Location:

First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South
Rochester, New York

Meeting Days :

Tuesday the 12th & Tuesday the 26th (September)

Tuesday the 10th & Tuesday the 24th (October)

7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. - social

7:15 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. – meeting

Contacts:

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TCF Regional Coordinator:

Jacquie Edwards-Mitchell 718-451-0814

TCF National :

877-969-0010 or

www.compassionatefriends.org

Send newsletter inputs or web comments to:

Joan Carafos, jcarafos@photikon.com

If you would like to contribute to our Compassionate Friends Chapter, please forward your Love Gifts and Donations to:
The Compassionate Friends of Rochester
C/O 3446 Rush Mendon Road Honeoye Falls, NY 14472
Please make checks payable to: The Compassionate Friends of Rochester, New York

Sincere Thanks!

To receive this newsletter via e-mail, please contact
Alice Torres at alice3970@gmail.com

***Welcome New Friends***

At nearly every meeting we welcome new members to our group, always with mixed emotions. We are glad you found us, but we are so sorry for the circumstances that bring us together. We understand your pain; we hope our unconditional friendship and understanding will help you through your grief.

Attending a meeting for the first two or three times takes courage, but for many it is the first real step toward healing. It may seem overwhelming, so we encourage you to come to several meetings to give yourself a chance to become comfortable.

Rochester Chapter TCF Mission:

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. Adopted 2-25-12

Our Children Remembered September 2017 Birthdays and Remembrance



Birthday

Lesley Lauren Catchman - Rosato	September 1
Brian Keith Nelson	September 7
Carrie Jean Kubarycz	September 8
Michael B. Coons	September 12
Brandon Alexander Lass	September 12
Rolf Gerald Hallinan	September 13
William Tyler Conti	September 13
Matthew Gabe Fogarassy	September 14
Douglas M. Slocum	September 18
Tannya Ruiz	September 18
Scott William Baxter	September 21
Paul McManus Jr.	September 26
Brandon M. Sauer	September 28
Jennifer Lynn McNeil	September 29

Remembrance

Jordan R. Doty	September 3
Katie Lyn Fields	September 4
Terri A. Clingerman	September 5
David George Carafos	September 7
John W. Pulver	September 8
Mary Jo Palka	September 10
Justin Adam Rifenberg	September 14
Rachael Marie Toombs-Lassiter	September 15
Joshua Daniel Price	September 18
Daniel Francis Colangelo	September 18
Brian Charles Oster	September 21
Briana C. Talty	September 22
Clarence L. Ross, II	September 22
William Tyler Conti	September 24



Our Children Remembered October 2017 Birthdays and Remembrance



Birthday

Jonathan C. Phillips	October 5
Zackary Monroe McCarthy	October 5
Colleen Josephine Dobbins	October 5
Justin Lake McLellan	October 6
Keith Martin Wilson	October 7
Matthew A. Farash	October 8
Patrick Blandford	October 8
Ashley Logan Pokracki	October 14
Michael F. Cooper	October 15
William Peter Cook	October 19
Daniel Francis Colangelo	October 19
Kelly Lynne Forrest	October 29

Remembrance

Richard John Tanner	October 2
Patrick D. Cooley	October 2
Thomas Joseph Drasch	October 3
Chris E. Saunders Jr.	October 4
Matthew Brian Rezsnyak	October 10
Carol Helena Burghdorf	October 14
Cameron Dylan Boyd	October 16
Ashley Logan Pokracki	October 18
Scott William Baxter	October 22
Sam Lowery	October 24
Jason Dobrowski	October 24
David J. Hughes	October 25
Matthew James Straton	October 29
Joseph W. Cecchi	October 30

