

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child.

BRANDYWINE HUNDRED CHAPTER

www.BrandywineTCF.org

Chapter leaders: Debbie Ferguson
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Connections

I gathered my thoughts to think about the month of April and how my life was forever changed on April 16, 2005. It is difficult to comprehend that terrible day. The knock on the door was forever etched in my brain. The pain engulfed my whole physical and emotional being. How did I get from that day to where I am now? There are two things that made a difference. Time and friends, My Compassionate Friends.

Last summer I attended my fourth national conference of The Compassionate Friends in Arlington, Virginia. This conference was different for me. I have grown since my first conference in Michigan in 2006. That was the one where I had no idea what I was doing.

At the luncheon on the first day, author Maria Housden spoke of her journey since the death of her three-year-old daughter Hannah. She wrote the book "Hannah's Gift: Struggles of a Life Fully Lived". She is a wonderful speaker. I cried through her whole speech. I met Lynn, a mother from Virginia Tech. Her daughter was a freshman at Virginia Tech the year of the shootings, and she died in a car accident the following year. My connection with Virginia Tech was through my dad who was a Hokie. Lynn showed me a photograph that she took at the memorial service that took place on April 16, 2009. My most important connection with Virginia Tech is that on the day of the shootings on April 16, 2007, I was grieving for my son, as it was the second anniversary of his death. Lastly and most powerfully, was my experience with Susan at the yoga workshop. We were partnered up and took turns as speaker and listener, being each other's child and saying to them anything we wanted to say. It felt like our child was in front of us and we were really talking to them. Susan and I are also bereaved adult siblings, from events that took place over twenty years ago. Her brother's name was Jim. My son's name was Jim. This was incredible for both of us.

I was a volunteer at this conference. On Thursday afternoon I was a WWW (what, when and where) person. I wore an Uncle Sam hat and directed people to the places where they needed to get to. I also was a workshop monitor. I announced the presenter and handed out and collected the evaluation forms. I believe Jimmy played a hand in my ability to do this. Even a few months before, I could not have imagined this.

The last 6 years, I have met so many wonderful people, people who, one day just like me, had an intact family. Then one day everything changed. We sat in excruciating pain, alone and scared. Then our hearts and the hearts of our children were joined. Today we walk together.

As the 6th anniversary of my son's death descends on my family this April 16th, I value the love of my compassionate friends more and more every day. You are my family of friends.

In love and kindness,
Judy Pantalino
Jimmy's mom

This newsletter is sponsored by Caroline Figenshu in memory of



Donna Kelly
4/30/62 - 2/16/84



Laura Kelly
8/13/63 - 8/20/90



Paula Kelly
11/28/59 - 3/7/10

This newsletter is sponsored by
Judy & Richard Pantalino
in memory of our son Jimmy
7/11/1983 - 4/16/2005



Jimmy, we love you and miss you every day".
Love, Mom and Dad

GIFTS of LOVE

This month we thank the following
for their continued support of our local chapter

Judy Filipkowski
in memory of her son Robert Seidemen
Betty Malatesta
in memory of her sons
Anthony & Larry Pacelli
Jim & Mary Welch
in memory of their son Jimmy

If you would like to send a donation please send it to:
TCF
PO Box 114
Rockland, DE 19732
make check payable to
The Compassionate Friends.

Newsletter Sponsorship Criteria:

We are now accepting 2 sponsors/month.
\$100 Donation to BHCTCF Newsletter
(this still only covers part of cost)
Email a jpeg photo of your child
or send a photo.

Include a short note to go with the photo.

Please submit by the 1st of the month
preceding the newsletter (i.e. May 1st
for the June Newsletter).

Or earlier if you want a specific month.

E-mail: othellTCF@verizon.net
Phone: 656-9288

APRIL CALENDAR

April 12th

6:30 pm Social Time with **Birthday Cake**
To celebrate April birthdays
7 pm Meeting - General Sharing

April 21st

6:30 pm **Socialize Pre-Meeting**
7 pm Speaker: Debbie Ferguson

HOPE

Followed by General Sharing

July 15 - 17

34th National Conference, Minnesota
Make reservation Soon!
Contact Othell for details

July 17

Local TCF Walk
for info
Contact Patti Still
999-6996



Need someone to talk with?
Having a bad day?
Give us a call.
We also suffered
the loss of a child.
So we know you are in pain.
We care about you
and want to help

Nancy Taylor
(Suicide & Only Child)
234-1654

Mary Mullin
(Suicide)
(610) 497-3447

Mary Welch
(Long Term Illness)
(302)475-7050

Volunteers

Volunteers run our chapter

We still have Volunteer Openings for:
Furnishing Birthday Cakes for meetings
Writing Front Page for Newsletter
Book Reports
Articles
Donations are always welcome
(our donations are down)
Sponsor newsletter
Other donations direct or through United Way
Chairperson to organize our quarterly dinners

Thanks

To our continuing **backstage** crew:

Including

Millie Acosta:	setup for meetings
Meg Kinsler:	Remembrance Cards
Linda Simone:	Making Buttons
Mary Mullin	Answering Chapter Phone
Patti Still:	Planning for local Walk
Caroline Figenshu	Treasurer
Debbie Ferguson	Co-Leader
Barbara Spadaccini	Co-Leader
Dean Decker	Chapter Webmaster
Bill & Othell Heaney	Newsletter Editors

April Birthday Cakes

Donated by

Jim & Mary Welch
in memory of their son Jimmy

Caroline Figenshu
in memory of her daughters
Donna, Laura & Paula Kelly

SCHEDULED MEETINGS:

Meetings start at 7:00 p.m.
on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month

MEETING PLACE:

Brandywine Valley Baptist Church
7 Mt. Lebanon Road

DIRECTIONS:

From I 95 go north on US 202 (Concord Pike)
Turn left onto Mt. Lebanon Rd.
Church is on right side of road next to the YMCA.
Parking lot and entrance in the back of the church.

We Remember April's Children

BIRTHS	
THOMAS ARMSTRONG	April 30
ANDREW BARANOWSKI	April 19
MATTHEW BAUMEISTER	April 05
BRIAN HAMBLETON	April 14
ROGER HEANEY	April 17
ROMA JADICK	April 10
DONNA KELLY	April 30
NICK KLOSIEWICZ	April 02
MICHAEL KMAT	April 30
DAN MOLITOR	April 30
ANTHONY PACELLI	April 29
KELLY RICHTER	April 29
ROBERT SEIDEMAN	April 17
RICHARD TELEIS	April 25
JAMES WELCH	April 18

DEATHS	
THOMAS ARMSTRONG	April 07
KELLIE CAHALL	April 30
DOMINIC FRANCIS CAMPISI	April 17
HAMPTON COLEMAN, III	April 11
KIM FERGUSON	April 02
DANIEL HALL	April 08
JOHN MICHAEL JACOBBER	April 07
NICOLE ELIZABETH KERR	April 14
CHRISTIAN MOLITOR	April 26
KIMBERLY MURPHY	April 25
MICHAEL MURPHY	April 19
JIMMY PANTALINO	April 16
MARIKEN STRAUB-KESSLER	April 01
SEAN TIDWELL	April 15
SANDI WAGNER	April 05



Want to know what to reply when someone says, "It seems to me, -- you should be getting over that by now"?

How about the quote from William Shakespeare?

"Everyone can master a grief but he that has it."

from the book by Martha Hickman
Healing After Loss

Searching

*Once again my list has vanished -
it was here but now is missing.
Keys and glasses disappearing -
books and letters - overdue.
I'm forever searching, searching,
they must be here
and I need them!
Could it be that what is missing,
what I want this very minute --
could it be that what I'm really
searching for,
my child, is you?*

Joyce Andrews
TCF SugarLand TX

Letting Go

One evening at the kitchen table my four-year-old daughter Barbara watched with interest as I was preparing to mail out some letters concerning *The Compassionate Friends*.

She showed a keen interest in the logo sticker I attached to the corner of a large brown envelope. Her big blue eyes took on a seriousness I had never seen before as she asked, "Mommy, why is the 'kid' so far away from his hands?"

I replied as honestly as I could

"Because the 'kid' has died and the hands are a mommy's and a daddy's reaching for the child." She turned those blue eyes to meet mine and said "I think you're wrong, Mom. I think the hands are letting him go."

How remarkably perceptive children are!



I sat there astounded by what she had suggested: then I grabbed a pen to write down what she had said. This was, I thought a sage piece of wisdom from someone who believes in old Santa and the Tooth Fairy and wishing on stars.

In her innocent way, she made me see I was still reaching. It has been two years since BJ. was still-born. But I continue to reach for something. Just what that something is, I don't know, but I'll know what it is when I find it. Perhaps then part of me can let go.

Part of me will never let go. Barbara's comment made me wonder though. Do children sense that death is a process of letting go, that letting go is okay for those whose time it is to let go?

I don't have an answer yet, but maybe my blue-eyed Barbara does. Maybe, just maybe, all children do!

Edith Fraser
TCF. Winnipeg, Canada

Missing Out

Submitted by Caroline Figenshu

The man whispered,
"God, speak to me"
And a meadowlark sang

But, the man did not hear

So the man yelled
"God speak to me!"
and thunder rolled
across the sky

But, the man did not Listen

The man looked around
and said
"God, let me see you"
And a star shined brightly

But, the man did not see



The Man shouted,
"God show me a miracle!"
And, a life was born

But, the man did not notice.

So, the man cried out in despair
Touch me God, let me know you are
here!"
Whereupon, God reached down
and touched the man

But, the man brushed the butterfly away
and walked on

**Don't miss out on a blessing
because it isn't packaged
the way you expect**

Rose-Colored Glasses

There are some days when nothing helps. Silent pain echoes across the heart, leaving tear stains and shattered dreams. It hurts to move, to think, to breathe, it even hurts to be. On those days, when memories burn scars deep into the soul, there seems little relief.

All the coping tricks we have tried in the past seem to fail us, and we are left with a pain so deep that we fear we will be consumed by it. We firmly believe that we shall never again find hope or joy in this world. Our own death often seems the only escape.

That despair comes at the bottom of the valley. We have all stumbled across those treacherous rocks - many of us more than once. Just as we begin to think that we might survive, something tumbles us back into the darkness and we are sure we have drowned.

What then? It is as if we are left without our dreams or our memories. Existence had become a void, filled with nothingness - not even hurt. On those days, we cannot even feel our pain. We come to know that we can never return to the Land of Make-believe where Humpty Dumpty is put back together without a trace of the jagged edges where he broke into a million pieces and where everything lives happily ever after.

Those are the days when we must put on "our rose-colored glasses" and learn to "see" in new ways. I always carry my rose-colored glasses with me because I never know when such a day is going to happen.

My special glasses give a rosy hue to even the most dismal of views; but more important people look at me differently. Maybe they see me differently because I see things in a new way.

Just putting on my rose-colored glasses gives me a lift. I know that whatever I am looking at or feeling hasn't really changed I have changed! Whenever I have dared to laugh in the face of pain, the pain didn't change or go away. I simply changed the way I saw the pain or the emptiness or the hurt of grief.

Rose colored glasses are simply a dramatic (and perhaps a little silly) change in perspective. But what's wrong with being silly sometimes? If I can catch my breath and gain a few seconds of relief from the emptiness of my grief, then they have created a miracle for me.

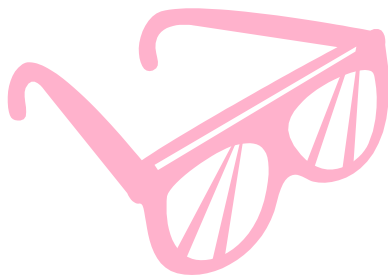
Wearing rose-colored glasses isn't denying anything. Rather, it is claiming it all. It is searching for joy and light and life, even in the darkest of corners. Love is the reason we hurt, but on those days when all we can see is the hurt, then we fear we may be losing the love. Life does become good and warm and loving once again, but only when we have learned to trust enough to move through the hurt and to claim even that which hurts so terribly. It is a part of us, and as such cannot be ignored or abandoned. Looking at the world through rose-colored glasses isn't being a Pollyanna, it's being real in the most honest sense. It is an attempt to both accept and live what is instead of turning it all away and denying that love ever existed.

If you ever laughed with your loved one, you have already worn rose-colored glasses. Don't forget them now. They helped you conquer mountains before and they will help you to see the other side of grief, someday.

Don't wait for joy to come to you - go find it. Search for it insist on it every day. Wearing rose-colored glasses is a change in perspective; nothing less. It is not a choice between pain or no pain, but how we manage the pain we feel.

The trick to those days is learning to live with what you've got instead of wishing something else had happened. As you pick your next step through the valley, remember that the rocks are everywhere, but so is the path! Don't let death rob you of your heart spaces - the place where your loved one lives. Don't let death dominate the Spring places in your heart. Don't let death rob you of your rose-colored glasses.

Darcie D. Sims, TCF, Austin, TX
from "*Why Are the Casseroles Always Tuna?*"



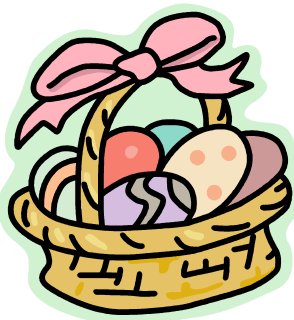
Happy Easter

Easter bunnies, brand new clothes, egg hunts, candy and baskets - the start of Spring. How exciting is this time of the year: a new beginning, everything so fresh and so invigorating! But unfortunately only painful and sorrowful memories are here for those of us who are bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings. Gone is the laughter, the excitement in a special child's eyes, the feeling of a whole new aspect in life.

Spring is here and the world appears ready to be born again with new life, new hope, new wonders. How can we view life in this way when part of ourselves is now gone, forever lost to us? How can our lives continue to go on when one of us is missing, no longer able to share in this "newness" of life? It seems so unfair! And yet, out of our "darkness" comes the first signs of hope, a "bud" of survival, a moment of laughter, a memory of a happier time.

The Easter season usually represents rebirth; let this season be the "birth!" of your finding your way back to life again, of finding the ability to heal, and of being able to resolve your grief so that hope and comfort is once again in your lives. Let this time of the year show you can make it through this deepest, most difficult, and sorrowful time of your lives.

Chris Gilbert
TCF, Tampa, FL



Happy Passover

Jews throughout the world will celebrate the holiday of Passover. Passover has been called our favorite holiday because it operates on so many levels. It is a time of triumph but it is also a time of tears.

Perhaps at no other time do we feel the absence of our loved ones more than at the time of Passover. As we gather around the Passover table, we cannot help but recall those who were so dear to us in life, and who are with us no more. We recall them in friendship and in love, for Passover is the time of family service. But even as we mourn their loss, we understand that the life of the dead is now placed in the memory of the living.

Spring and Passover are a time of new hope and new life.

by Rabbi Earl Grollman



Happy Spring



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Questions and Answers

**This Healing Journey
an Anthology for Bereaved Siblings**

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.