

FEBRUARY



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Local Chapter Notes

- ❖ **GUEST SPEAKER – Jennifer Vazquez, LCSW**
This has been rescheduled to May 6th. Jennifer apologizes for the January cancellation but she was hit with the flu. We look forward to seeing her in a few months.
- ❖ **THE POWER OF MUSIC**
The music from the Candle Vigil will be on hand if you would like to discuss your song choice and what it means to you. If you were not at the vigil then please feel free to bring in a song on CD that we can play and discuss. If you forget or do not have access to burn a CD then you can talk about a song(s) that remind you of your child/grandchild or sibling.

REMEMBRANCE CARD COORDINATOR

Do you recall receiving a card on the anniversary or birthday of your loved one and it was from TCF Mercer? Did that card help you and remind you that you are not alone? If so please consider taking over this position. Peggy Hegedus is stepping down after sending these cards for over four years. If you are interested please contact us at 609-516-8047 or info@tcfmercer.org. Must have computer access since the member database is on an Excel spreadsheet. Thanks to Peggy for her years of service and dedication to our group.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Nancy Kislán

We thank you for welcoming us into your lives during such a difficult time. We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting so we can get to know you and your family. Please remember that you are not alone!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

This month the TCF Mercer Chapter celebrates it's 33rd anniversary. If you have not attended a meeting in a while, please consider dropping by and letting us know how you are doing. Also, you can be a tremendous support to the newly bereaved.

MEETING INFORMATION

WHEN:

February 4, 2013
The first Monday of each month at 7:00pm



MEETING TOPIC:

The Power of Music

FACILITATOR:

Joann Van Hise

WHERE:

Capitol Health Systems in Hamilton



Newsletter Mailings

Thanks to **Linda Whitehouse** for mailing out the **February** newsletters.

Refreshments

Thanks to all of our members that bring refreshments to the meetings each month.

Inclement Weather

In the event of bad weather – please call the hotline at 609-516-8047 or visit the website at tcfmercer.org about the cancellation of upcoming meetings.

With loving remembrance of our children not here but always in our hearts

February Birthdays



Edward John Anderson	Son of Irene
Samuel Phillips Esposito	Son of Kathleen and John
Michael A. Festa	Son of Donna and Joe
Matthew Aaron Kraus	Son of Michael
Elizabeth LaRosa	Daughter of Judith & Joseph
Aaron LeComte	Son of Norman
Owen Michael O'Brien	Son of Carla and Jim
Adrian Davis	Son of Carolyn
Craig Robinson	Son of Marjorie & Ronald
Edison Ruef	Son of Jennifer and Martin
Sarah Townsend	Daughter of Laurie and Roy
Peter Bruce Warren	Son of Elizabeth & Perry

Please let us know if you encounter an error in your child's listing and a correction will be made immediately.

February Anniversaries

Richard J. Riley Jr.	Son of Helen Augustyn and Richard Riley Sr.
Bill Harkanson	Son of Linda and Ken
Tyler Donovan Kramer	Son of Rita Kerr
Matthew Aaron Kraus	Son of Michael
Aaron LeComte	Son of Norman
Donna Marie Dreher	Daughter of Linda



REMEMBRANCE TABLE

Be sure to bring in a photo or special memento each month so that we can celebrate the memory of your son or daughter together!

*We want to thank and acknowledge the following
for their generous support of our chapter and especially, our newsletter:*

**Ronald & Marjorie Robinson,—
son Craig Ronald Robinson, 2/26**

Dear Craig,

**Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasurer.
You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure. Happy 41st Birthday.**

Love, Mom & Dad

How Did GRIEF Get an Expiration Date?

By Lynne B. Hughes

<http://www.hellogrief.org/how-did-grief-get-an-expiration-date/>

Certain things need an expiration date. Milk, eggs, mayonnaise, meat, fish... there is a time we need to be done with them, and throw them away... I get all that. But does grief have an expiration date? For some reason, there seems to be an acceptable shelf life—6-12 months—and then grief should be off the shelf, out of the home and permanently removed with the weekly trash service. If it was only that simple...

The "grief expiration date" myth must come from people who have never experienced a close death – otherwise they would know the truth. Everyone fears facing such a loss. They are hopeful that should death touch their world, it will only take 6-12 months to recover. No one wants someone they love to die. So, until faced with the reality, it's easier to think 'this won't happen to me, AND if it does it will only be bad for a finite, short amount of time and then...there's an expiration date and it is magically all gone.'

What a wonderful world that would be.

I've heard time and time again there is a societal expectation to "get over" grief in 6 months, and at the longest, a year. Those who aren't grieving believe it, and often those who are also believe it - this sets grieving people up for false, and ultimately disappointing, expectations.

The one year mark looms like some golden carrot over the heads of those who are grieving. It is a symbol of hope that if they make it to the one year mark they will be in a much happier and pain free place.

The reality is they won't be over it, nor should they be. If someone spent years loving another person, the pain of that person's death simply will not be removed due to a date on the calendar.

The opposite actually might happen – people who are grieving may feel even more pain in year two because the initial numbness, which often serves as a protective barrier at the onset of loss, has worn off and they begin experiencing the full intensity of their feelings and grief. This is accompanied by the realization that life with loss is their “new normal.”

I lost my mother at 9 and father at 12. I remember feeling the expectation of a grief expiration date myself. I remember being 15, five years after my mother died and three years after my father died. If I had a tough day missing my parents, people looked shocked, or avoided the subject, or avoided me. Sometimes I would hear insensitive comments, like “aren’t you over that?” Or when someone experienced a more recent loss, I would get “Oh, poor [so and so]. What a tragic loss. Aren’t you glad you are over that now?”

I remember beating myself up and doubting how well I was coping. If you allow yourself to believe there is an expiration date for grief, you will start to think you aren’t doing well if you still miss your loved one 5, 10, 20, 40 years after the loss. In reality – it’s normal. And it’s okay.

This is what I know to be true:

Grief IS a life-long journey. An emotional handicap you get up, and live with everyday. It doesn’t mean you can’t lead a happy life, but it is a choice, and takes work.

The frequency and intensity of those grief pangs/knives should lessen over time, but the reality is every now and then for the rest of your life, you will feel those pangs. Everyone grieves at their own pace, and in their own way. There is no one way to grieve, and no certain order, and no timeline. There is definitely not an expiration date. Grief will take on different forms in different people. Not everyone cries; others cry all the time. Some exercise a lot. Others talk about it a lot. Many seek counseling or join a support group, and enjoy the company of a good and understanding listener.

If years after your loss, thinking of your loved one missing a special day or milestone in your life, makes you sad, puts you in a funk, or makes you cry, don’t beat yourself up. Allow yourself the ability to grieve the loss of memories not created. As long as the frequency and intensity of grief eases—even if it is slowly over time—you are coping in positive ways. Alternatively, if years after the loss, you can’t bear the mention of your loved ones name, you sleep all day, you aren’t participating in your normal everyday activities, you do things to “numb” or escape your grief, those are warning signs that you are not coping well, and should seek the assistance you need to begin healing.

Grieving in a healthy manner, taking steps to move forward, and rebuild your life with a new normal, doesn’t mean you won’t have those tough days or tough moments.

There is no expiration date. Grief never fully goes away. That doesn’t have to mean you can’t and won’t live a happy and productive life. What it does mean is the love you shared with loved ones lost, doesn’t have an expiration date either.

LOVE GIFT DONATION FORM

A **LOVE GIFT** is a donation given in memory of a child who has died. It can also be in honor of a happy event that you would like to acknowledge. Your contributions can be in any amount, are tax deductible and are a source of income for our non-profit chapter. **Checks can be made out to TCF Mercer and sent to: The Compassionate Friends, PO Box 3203, Mercerville, NJ 08619.**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Child's Name _____ Relationship to child _____

Birthdate _____ Anniversary Date _____

Amount \$ _____ Dedicate the newsletter in the month of _____

If you would like a picture of your child in the newsletter please email it to info@tcfmercer.org

Please fill out the following for a two-line message that will be printed in the newsletter:

Every effort will be made to include your dedication in the month that you specify - please be sure to mail your information before the newsletter mailing. The newsletter is typically mailed one week prior to the monthly meeting.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS		
Chapter Leader:	OPEN	
Meeting Facilitators:	Various	
Remembrance Card Coordinator:	OPEN	
Correspondence Secretary	Toni Nowalinski	Since April 2012
Newsletter Editor:	OPEN	Since January 2013
Treasurer:	OPEN	
Event Coordinator	Shannon Pope	Since February 2012
Librarian:	Michael Stathis	Since January 2013
New Member Coordinator	Linda Silverstein	Since October 2012
Chapter Delegate:	Toni Nowalinski	Since January 2013
SCM Minutes:	Rich Narcini	Since February 2008
Web Master/Editor	Wil Hitchman	Since March 2009
Media Coordinator	Toni Nowalinski	Since December 2012

TCF Mercer Chapter Address:
 PO Box 3203, Mercerville, NJ 08619 [609-516-8047](tel:609-516-8047) info@tcfmercer.org or visit us online at www.tcfmercer.org

Capital Health System of Hamilton, 1445 Whitehorse-Mercerville Road, Hamilton, NJ

From the North (New Brunswick and Princeton):

Follow Route 1 South to Quakerbridge Rd. Take the Quakerbridge Rd. Exit East. Go through approximately seven lights before you come to Route 33. Go through the intersection of Route 33 (Applebee's Restaurant will be on left corner). Street name changes to Whitehorse-Mercerville Rd. Go through three lights. CHS in Hamilton is on the left, immediately following third light.

From South Jersey:

Take Route 295 North to Exit 61 (Arena Drive). At the third light, make a left onto Whitehorse Avenue. Whitehorse Avenue changes to Whitehorse-Mercerville Road. Proceed on road for three lights. CHS in Hamilton is located on the right after the fourth light (#1445).

From the East (Freehold/Jackson):

Take Route 195 West towards Trenton. Exit at Hamilton Square. At the traffic light, make a left onto Kuser Rd. Follow Kuser Rd. for approximately two miles. The K-Mart Shopping Center will be on your left. Make a right onto Whitehorse-Mercerville Road. Proceed on Whitehorse-Mercerville Rd. through one more traffic light. CHS in Hamilton is on the right.

From the West (Ewing/Trenton):

Follow Olden Ave. East to Whitehorse Ave. Make a left onto Whitehorse Ave. Proceed on Whitehorse Ave. to Kuser Rd. (K-Mart Shopping Center). Go through the intersection of Whitehorse Ave. and Kuser Rd. The name of the road will change to Whitehorse-Mercerville Rd. Proceed on Whitehorse-Mercerville Rd. through one more traffic light. CHS in Hamilton is on the right.

From Pennsylvania (Route 95):

Take Route 95 North to Route 295 South to Route 33 East (Mercerville Exit). Follow to traffic light. Make a left onto Nottingham Way. You will need to be in right lane on Nottingham Way Make a right onto Quakerbridge Rd. Go through traffic light at Route 33 (Applebee's Restaurant will be on left corner). Street name changes to Whitehorse-Mercerville Rd. Go through three lights. CHS in Hamilton is on the left, immediately following third light.

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Mercer Area Chapter

PO Box 3203 Mercerville, NJ 08619

2013 Meeting Dates

2/4 3/4 4/1 5/6

Meetings start at 7pm!