

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**April 2020**  
**Volume 32, Number 4**

**The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.**

### Chapter Leader

Joyce Gradinscak  
 Catherine Walker  
 Michelle Ciemnicki  
 734-778-0800

### Newsletter Editor

Brenda Brummel  
 10531 Calumet Trail  
 Gaylord, MI 49735  
 231-585-7058  
 bbwriter59@aol.com

### Treasurer

Rhonda Temple  
 25164 Hanover St.  
 Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

### Meeting Information

When: First Thursday of  
 each month. 7-9 p.m.  
 Where: St. Timothy's Church  
 16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,  
 East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of  
 Six Mile

### Coming Events:

See note on page 1

Please follow the guidelines as set forth  
 by our governor and

STAY HOME  
 STAY SAFE

If you need to talk to someone, you can  
 reach out to me, to Gail (734-748-2514)  
 or the chapter phone listed above.

The April TCF Chapter Monthly meeting is cancelled due to the coronavirus concerns we are all experiencing. As this newsletter goes to press we are not sure about the upcoming Craft Day (April 18) and TCF Dinner (April 21) and Leadership Training (April 25) planned for April. It is unknown what will happen after the 3 week shut down of so many of our workplaces, gatherings, schools, churches, etc.

For our members we suggest you check with our The Compassionate Friends of Livonia Michigan facebook page for updates. If you are not a member of the Facebook page for our group, please ask to join, complete the questions, and you will be approved and join the group page. You can also check with another TCF member and/or call the TCF number, 734-778-0800.

Remember ..... we are in this together.

We need not walk alone, we are The Compassionate Friends

### Love Never Goes Away

“Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing.” Sounds familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous “ouchies” can compare with the hurt we feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have, so—we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable—some day.

TIME—the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child: the first word, first tooth, first date, first car—now we don't have that measure any more. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME—to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy” and TIME to remember. Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments—but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief—it only becomes tolerable and livable. Change your focus a bit. Instead of

(Continued on page 4)

# Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

*This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.*

## **Let Us Remember Them Always**

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
--------------	-------------------------------------	-------------	------------

*Information withheld for privacy reason.*



***Let Us Celebrate Their Births***

*Softly ... may peace  
replace heartache  
and cherished memories  
remain with you always on  
your child's birthday*

dwelling on how much you lost, try thinking of how much you had. Try letting good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child—HE [SHE] DIED. We don't lose the love that flowed between —it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

*Darcie D. Sims*

### My April Child

"In the midst of winter I found within myself an invincible summer." — Albert Camus

When our daughters were growing up the arrival of springtime was a favorite time of the year, filled with anticipation of the coming of special days of family fun. The freshness of the air, the brilliant colors of springtime trees and flowers, and the song of the birds returned from their winter retreat resounded the message of hope and that life was good. We had survived another cold, snowy Michigan winter and were soon to be rewarded with blue sky, sunshine and temperatures well above freezing!

Birthdays in our family were a time of celebration together. Each year Larry, Anna, Debbie and I, and perhaps a friend or two, would celebrate Anna's April birthday by dining at her favorite Mexican restaurant. There would be lots of silliness and laughter. During her teenage years, Anna would always forewarn us not to have the staff come to our table to sing their crazy birthday song. Of course, since we always insisted that our role as parents was to embarrass our children, her threats and warnings could not stop our tomfoolery. I believe she secretly enjoyed the attention.

As Mother's Day approached, we looked forward again to spending the

day together as a family. We would attend church, go out for my favorite brunch, have lots of conversation, fill our bellies to the max, laugh until we cried, be silly, make memories... That was before...

Then the unthinkable happened. My April child died. How could those special days of love and togetherness, laughter and fun become among the most-dreaded days a mother must face? How could those days that we had once anticipated with joy and excitement bring such unbelievable heartache and confusion, loneliness and tears?

During those first few years we were simply lost. This was new, undesired, and certainly not requested, territory that we had been forced to enter. What were we supposed to do? How were we supposed to act? I just wanted to run away on her birthday. For several years we did just that. With hearts filled with the numbness of fresh grief, our restructured family of three would hop in the car and head out-of-town. We would spend the day busying ourselves with whatever it took to survive. We would laugh half-heartedly, share memories, or cry together as we struggled to discover our new identity as a family without Anna's physical presence.

As always, only a few short weeks following Anna's birthday Mother's Day would arrive right on schedule. The traditions we had come to love and enjoy became intensely painful. It became an impossible task to attend church services or go out for brunch. Seeing families enjoying their togetherness pierced my heart with an endless ache. My tear-filled eyes burned at the thought of being surrounded by "intact" families. Feelings of anger and resentment overwhelmed my heart. On the inside I wanted to lash out at all those mothers and fathers who were surrounded by all of their children and those sisters and brothers who had no clue what it would be like to lose a sibling. As the day drew to a close I felt tremendous relief that it was over. Exhausted, I would lay

silently with my head on my pillow as quiet tears lulled me to sleep.

It seems impossible that it has been nine birthdays and nine Mothers' Days since Anna died. In my heart it was only yesterday. I can still see her smile and hear her laugh. I can feel the warmth of a quick hug as she heads out the door. With each passing year comes a new reality of what it means to be a bereaved parent, of what it means to find a new normal for our lives. The pain continues to occasionally catch me off guard, but it is softer now. The tears still come, but less frequently. Warm memories bring joyful moments to the emptiness. I smile quietly to myself, reassured that Anna lives on in our hearts and lives, as well as in the hearts and lives of those around us. Once again each April we celebrate the day of her birth, for her life has been a gift of unimaginable joy. Our traditional Mother's day rituals have changed to new ones. There is more laughter now, fewer painful tears. I rejoice that I can celebrate that I am Debbie's Mom, and now Scott's mother-in-law, as well! Life is good.

The winter has been long and cold, as has been the winter of our grief. Springtime has arrived. The sunshine and blue sky, the purple crocus and yellow daffodils pushing through the warming earth bring hope of renewal and reassurance that life continues. Although there is an irreparable hole in my soul and an emptiness in my heart that will never leave, I am forever grateful that Anna lived with us for 23 years. I am eternally thankful that I am and I always will be Anna's Mom. May the warmth and brilliance of springtime fill your hearts with times of peace and hope and love.

*Paula Funk*

*TCF, Petoskey, MI*

### The Roller Coaster

As a child I enjoyed the thrill of the roller coaster: gliding up the giant track, reaching the top with a momentary anticipation and the thrill of the quick dropping roll to the bottom of the track. The deep turns, first to the

right and then to the left were designed to heighten the anticipation of the next climb and drop. In my childhood mind, these curves, climbs and drops were an isolated experience, temporary and fun. The ride would end.

A few months after my son's death, I dreamed of the roller coaster. But this time it wasn't fun. It was a nightmare of fear, anxiety and pain; I was so paralyzed that I couldn't breathe. That dream was the simple symbolism of life since my son died. Now I ride a different sort of roller coaster. The climb to the top is a slow, difficult rise to normalcy. The rapid descent to the bottom is yet another terrible setback. I hang onto the bar of sanity on the curves, first one way, then another. I really want to stop this ride, but it is forever. This ride won't end.

Today I recalled that roller coaster dream, in all its vivid detail, and I compare it to the roller coaster that is my life now. Are the highs lower and the lows higher? Are the curves softening? Yes, I believe they are. It's been two years and two months since Todd died. I still weep. Tiny tears still fall unexpectedly. I still have anxiety. I still feel as if the earth has dropped from under me. I still miss talking with my son. I miss seeing him. I ache for that special hug that only my child can give. Yes, I miss my only child very much. My heart has been shattered, my definition of myself has been altered and my loneliness is incomprehensible. But something has changed on the roller coaster of this life.

That something is, of course, me. I work through my grief in many, many ways. I have consciously shifted the paradigms of my life. I have learned to evaluate people from a different perspective. I have become so sensitive to the pain of other parents that I feel it as if it were my own. I have stopped anticipating how I will handle stressful events, anniversaries, birthdays, holidays. I have learned to live without being a part of my grandchildren's lives. I have learned to keep negative energy and negative people at a far distance. I have learned that a routine provides

necessary structure. I have learned to live in the moment, to take joy in simple things, to talk openly about my child's life and to acknowledge the things I cannot change.

As time moves forward, I will continue to accept what is given and give what I can. I know the roller coaster will level out eventually. For as long as I live, I will keep my child with me, in my heart. That's all I can do as I ride this changing roller coaster that is now my life.

Written in memory of my son, Todd  
*Annette Mennen Baldwin*  
*TCF, Katy, TX*

### Springtime Thoughts Lead to Children Who Have Died

After an unusually, stormy, cold winter all over the nation, spring has finally arrived. The days are getting longer, the weather is getting warmer, and the flowers are now blooming. Along with nature's beauty comes thoughts of our children who are no longer with us. Oh, how they, too, would love the beautiful sunsets, seeing the return of the birds from the south and perhaps experience a new crop or newly born animals coming out of their winter shelters.

But they will not see any of this, and it makes me very sad to think not only what we parents have lost but also of what they, our children, have lost. It was only after my daughter died that I came to appreciate the little things in life, stopping for a moment to listen to two birds talking to each other, watching airplanes leave streaks across the clear blue sky; and seeing Marcy's favorite flower blooming, the lily, knowing that I will leave those flowers on her grave the next time I visit the cemetery.

Many, many things I have come to realize are not very important when you compare them to losing a child: the daily baseball scores, the fact that gasoline has gone up another penny, the most recent Hollywood couple to divorce.

We don't always have good days; the

sense of loss and emptiness is greatly intensified on these beautiful days and has emotional triggers for the bereaved – graduations, Mother's Day, summer vacation and trees blooming once again.

The coming of spring does not make everything okay again. What it does do is offer hope: hope that the pain of losing your child will ease a little with each passing year, hope that your grief work will help you in the healing process, and hope that you will be able to move forward into a new life full of promise. Spring reminds us that regardless of what has happened in our lives, nature's process continues as we must also. Be kind and patient with yourself. Don't expect too much, too soon, but try to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your body, and notice the smile that will form both on your face and in your heart  
*Sandy Fox*

### Remember

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I died, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart.

*Frederick B.*  
*TCF, "Whistling in the Dark"*  
*Houston West Chapter*

### Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out – because crawl out we must...on our bellies.

We are different now, with differ-

# Livonia Chapter Page

**A Love Gift** is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form on back page.

- ♥ Fran Relyea “Thank God for this organization”
- ♥ Susan Myers “In memory of Paul”
- ♥ Aunt Michele & Uncle Ray Schmidt “In loving memory of our beautiful niece, Erika Anstett”

---

## New Members

*We welcome new members. We are so sorry for the circumstance that has brought you here. Although we have no easy answers, we can offer you understanding through our common experiences. We also know how much courage it took for you to attend.*

Tammy Burgwin, whose beloved son, **Bradley**, Born 2/1; Died 8/18; 25 years  
Blair and Karie Still, whose beloved son, **Carter**, born 1/23; Died 1/23

---

## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

---

ent priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives – including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say “ended.”

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again – and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again – or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

*Renee Little  
TCF, Fort Collins, CO*

## Donation Basket



Again this year our chapter would like to donate a Michigan Basket to the auction at the 2020 National Conference in Atlanta. If you would like to donate, items we can use are: any sports team items from Detroit, any foods made here and you may have other ideas to add to the basket.

We please ask that you stay away from large glass items like wine bottles or things that may break easily in shipping. We thank you for any help you can provide. You may bring any donations to the chapter meetings through July and contact Kathy Rambo or Gail Lafferty with any questions.

## SIBS

### The “Forgotten Bereaved”

Grief over losing an adult sibling may go unacknowledged. Although more than four million U.S. adults lose a brother or sister each year, a dearth of information exists about the psychological effects this loss has on surviving siblings. Most research and advice focuses on sibling loss during childhood. But losing an adult brother or sister also has a profound, long-lasting impact on surviving siblings, as an increasing number of baby boomers are discovering.

Dr. Tina J. Wray, assistant professor of religious studies at Salve Regina University in Rhode Island, is one of just a few U.S. experts on adult sibling loss. Following the death of her own 43-year-old brother, Dr. Wray

discovered firsthand that society does not consider losing an adult sibling a loss on a par with other significant losses, such as the death of a spouse. She has written one of the few books available on the topic of adult sibling loss.

#### *Disenfranchised loss*

Dr. Wray believes that the death of a brother or sister in adulthood belongs in the category of what psychologists refer to as a disenfranchised loss — one that society generally trivializes or does not publicly acknowledge. Her own term for surviving siblings is the “forgotten bereaved.”

Although some people may offer genuine sympathy to a surviving sibling, others minimize the loss with dismissive condolences such as several quoted in Dr. Wray’s book:

“Thank goodness it wasn’t your husband.”

“How awful! How are your *parents* doing?»

“You lived in different states, so you probably weren’t very close.”

Disenfranchised loss not only denies bereaved siblings the social support that validates their feelings and helps ease some of their suffering, but can also lead mourners to hide or postpone their grief, which can prolong and complicate the grieving process.

Such disenfranchisement seems especially puzzling when one considers that the longest relationships most people have are with their siblings. Although it may sound cliché, sibling survivors may feel as though they have lost a piece of themselves when a brother or sister dies.

Adults who lose a sibling face a range of challenges, some of them common to all people who mourn, but others unique to the sibling relationship.

*Mortality.* A sibling is a peer, so the death of a brother or sister forces surviving siblings to confront their own mortality — sometimes years or even decades before they would otherwise do so.

*Guilt.* Surviving siblings also may suffer profound guilt in addition to their loss; after all, what brother or sister has not done or said something truly hurtful — often many times over — to their sibling at some point? Or they may suffer from survivor’s guilt. (Why him and not me?)

*Identity.* Siblings derive key aspects of their identity from their relationships with one another as they were growing up, and from shared family history. When a sibling dies, surviving brothers and sisters must redefine a core aspect of their identity and their role in the birth family.

*Delayed grief.* Adult siblings who have children of their own also can imagine the enormous impact of losing a child and, therefore, feel responsible for helping their parents cope. They may feel obligated to lend emotional or financial support to their sibling’s spouse and children, delaying or denying their own need to grieve.

### ***Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings?***

#### **TELEPHONE FRIENDS:**

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062

Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938

Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006

Joe Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919

Bob Vitolins - A father’s grief - (313) 882-8632

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

Kathy Rambo - Sudden Death - (734) 306-3930

***Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.***

#### **TCF CHAT ROOM**

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

**National Mailing Address:** PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; Phone: (630) 990-0010; Toll Free: (877)969-1101; Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

#### **OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:**

**Ann Arbor:** Mike Fedel: MikeFedela2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room)1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor

**St. Clair Shores:** 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, KJMac21@aol.com

**Detroit:** Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church,12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.

**Troy:** St. Paul’s Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

**South Rockwood TCF Chapter:** Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive. South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469

**Tecumseh TCF Chapter:** First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Rose Hatchett, 517-270-3308.



TCF Livonia Chapter  
Brenda Brummel  
10531 Calumet Trail  
Gaylord, MI 49735

April 2020

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,  
*please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel*

-----  
LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Love Gift Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Message: \_\_\_\_\_

Direct my gift to: \_\_\_\_\_ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web  
\_\_\_\_\_ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Rhonda Temple, 25164 Hanover St., Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

Thank You

We would like to thank everyone for coming out and supporting our TCF group at our Bowling Fundraiser on March 3, 2020.

We had a great time while raising funds so that our Livonia group can continue to help bereaved families. A special thank you to our husbands for helping by selling all the tickets. Thank you to Rhonda & Lee Temple for helping with set and clean up. Thank you for all the baskets donated to make the raffle a huge success. We appreciate all the help that makes fundraisers like this a success.

Mary Hartnett & Cindy Stevens  
Bowling Fundraiser Coordinators