

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



April 2017
Volume 29, Number 4

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

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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:

NEXT MEETING -April 6 - New members, siblings, topic tables: Topic: How do you relate to the article, *Faded Memories?*

April 18 - 6:30 pm TCF Dinner-at Brann's Steakhouse (39715 6 Mile, Northville, MI) sign up at meeting or call Kathy 734-306-3930 or katjrambo@wowway.com.

April 29 - Craft Day - see pg. 8

August 13 - First Annual TCF Picnic - more details later.

Forgiveness

Grieving is a fierce and overwhelming expression of love thrust upon us by a deep and hurtful loss of our child. Yet grieving is frequently such an entanglement of feelings that we often fail to recognize that ultimately, forgiveness must be an integral part of our grief and our healing. For what is love if forgiveness is silent with us? We learn to forgive our children for dying, ourselves for not preventing it. We begin to forgive our God or the fate we see ruling our universe.

We start to forgive friends and family for abandoning us in their own bewilderment over the onslaught of emotions they sense in our words and behavior. I believe we must be open to forgiveness.

Through its expression in our lives, be it through thought, word or deed, we find small ways to seek life once more. Deep within us, forgiveness is capable of treading the wasteland of our souls to help us feel again the love that has not died. It is the beginning of the release from dominance of pain, not from the continual hurt of missing the child or children we have lost, but from facing the fullness of the love we shared with our child. That love lives with strength inside ourselves and yet our beings are so entrapped in a swirling vortex of anger, despair, frustration, abandonment and depression that we often feel it only

lightly. Try to heed the quiet message that will, in time, be heard so softly in that maelstrom of the spirit. Forgive, and forgive unto forever. Let love unfold your anguish, helping you to learn to grow and strive beyond this hour, and peace will follow.

Dayle Barrett-Harry
TCF, Melbourne, Australia

LOSS

I am here among friends, smiling at their humour
And making plans for tomorrow.
But there is another person, lying curled in the corner,
Crying out in unbelievable pain.

That, too, is me.

I am doing my household chores,
And the routine is familiar and satisfying,

A gesture toward a need for living.
But there is another person, lying in bed,

Willing her mind a blank, not wanting to think or be.

That, too, is me.

I look at a lovely spring day,
A view of a world of growth and change,

A world only God could make.

But that other person stares through tears

With unseeing eyes, knowing there is no God.

That, too, is me.

(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

Child Parent, Grandparent, Sibling Date Age

April



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Please note there were two errors made in last month's newsletter. Anthony Guastella's angel date should be March 19. His parents are Larry and Cali Guastella. And, new members, Paul Berger's listing should have read Paul Burger, whose beloved son, ***Paul, Jr.***, Born 4/11; Died 12/18; 28 years. Please accept my apology for the errors. - *Brenda*

I am surrounded by my family.
A gathering of love and joy and tenderness,
Of cherished moments and warm hugs.
But another person is there, whose arms and heart
Ache for one she can never hold and comfort.

That, too, is me.

Very slowly, I am learning there is room
For joy and fun and cherished moments with friends.
In this hurry-up world, with no space or patience
For grieving, there may always be two of me,
And I'm doing the best I can for both.

That, too, is me.

Beth Lorber, Gassville, Arkansas

Thank you to all the special parents, family and friends who attended our "9th Annual Bowling Fundraiser". Also a big "Thank you" to Westland Bowl for hosting this wonderful event. It was a wonderful and special event.

Photo Button of Your Child

Email your photo to Laura Myers, lm Myers@mi.rr.com, or bring it to the meeting and she will copy it by taking a photo with her phone. Laura will resize your picture to fit and bring the 2 1/4" button to the next meeting. Any donations go to Livonia Compassionate Friends to help pay for supplies and programs.

The Strength of Butterflies

They didn't want to change.

Their lives were full.

The caterpillars crawled happily through the green leaves,
Played and rested in the sun, and ate their fill.

Yet, through the darkness and quiet mystery,
they did change.

Their luminous beauty now lights the skies,
their colors are vibrant, their airy flight is delightful.

They didn't want to change.

Their lives were full.

They laughed and worked and sang and played;
Our children loved their lives.

Yet, through the darkness and quiet mystery,
they did change.

Beyond their own imaginings they now live in indescribable harmony and perfect joy.
Their new lives are a color invisible to us, but it is the color of eternity.

We didn't want to change.

Our lives were full.

We cared and nurtured and disciplined and laughed and mothered and fathered;
we loved their lives and them.

Yet, through the darkness and quiet mystery,
we have changed.

Though fragile in our forever longing for them,
we are gifted with a growing strength of spirit called HOPE.

We are a resilient and enduring new color as well,
held close to our children by unbreakable threads of love
that keep us tethered for a while yet,
between earth and heaven.

Mary Sue Zercher—TCF Marietta, Georgia

Butterflies Make Me Happy

Sometimes in our grief we truly believe we are going crazy. We hurt so bad we don't think we can manage to go on living without our precious child here with us. Part of the grieving process is learning how to do just that. Some parents need the reassurance that their child is okay. I think the human mind can only take so much pain and jumps at the chance to see signs from their children, reassuring themselves that they are okay.

The way I look at it, if you get comfort from a dream or a sign ... enjoy it. You've suffered enough and believing in signs, butterflies, dreams or whatever else gives you comfort and hurts no one else, is your right as a bereaved parent.

Are these signs real or just in my imagination? Can I prove they are messages from my son? Does it even need to be proven? No, I can't scientifically prove it. But, I know that dreams, butterflies, signs and enjoyment in nature make me feel closer to Eric and therefore I will continue to enjoy them. It hurts no one, I'm not obsessive about it and anyone who chooses to think I am nuts for believing in such things, can think I'm nuts.

We've all heard how the butterfly is a symbol of rebirth. Whether it's our child moving from this world onto a higher plane or a bereaved parent emerging from the cocoon of grief into a world without our child here with us, butterflies are a comfort for many. When I'm missing my son and see a butterfly fluttering from flower to flower, I smile and feel better. When I'm in a happy mood and see a butterfly, I enjoy the beauty of such a delicate creature. Taking the time to slow down and watch such a fragile creature going about its business is calming and I don't think anyone should discount the benefits from having a calming moment.

About four months after Eric died, I had a dream about him. I awoke myself up from tears of joy running down my face. I knew he was okay ... what

a relief that was. I still hurt terribly and missed him more than I thought I could endure, but I felt comforted by the dream. Some could say it was my subconscious trying to sort things out, but I choose to believe it was his way of trying to comfort me. Either way, it made me feel better.

Maybe it's because bereaved parents walk around in such a fog and function on automatic pilot, that we are moving slow enough to notice the signs that are around us. Maybe dreams are one way for us to accept messages we need to hear and take into our hearts without logically trying to interpret them. Maybe faith is what we rely on when nothing else makes sense and we instinctively know we need something to hold on to. Whatever it is, just give me a second helping. I like feeling close to my son!

Lynn Vines, TCF, South Bay LA, CA

Faded Memories

I remember the first time I realized that my sense of my son, Jeremy, was beginning to fade. I was losing his smell, the exact color of his hair, the tone of his voice when he said, "Oh, Mom," the feel of his arms around me when I got a too seldom sixteen year old hug.

Until my son's death, it had never occurred to me that I knew him through all of my senses. I believe the profound sense of loss I've experienced results in part from this total cut-off from his being. It's not just that I can't physically see him, but the essence of who he was is gone. Perhaps that explains why I would often go to his room when I wanted to recapture a connection with him. Some nights I would sleep in his bed. I would wear his tee shirts. I would make a cocoon of an afghan that wrapped around him many times. Somehow, I felt his energy about me. I smelled his smell. At other times, I'd get out the zip lock bag; the one with snippets of his hair that was cut when they had to screw the "halo" in his head to secure his neck and severed spinal cord. I'd study

the color of his hair, memorizing the shades of light brown.

And the sounds? Only one, I found a cassette tape that he had recorded himself accompanying a favorite band. I listened to that for hours, eyes closed, trying to capture the vision of those moments. Although my behaviors might seem odd to some, the fear of fading memories eased.

Tom Robbins, in his book *Jitterbug Perfume*, says "Death is impatient and thoughtless. It barges into your room when you are right in the middle of something. It doesn't even bother to wipe its boots." True. I was in the middle of parenting my only child. Death not only left the dirty mess of grieving for me to cleanup, but I had no warning. Had I had warning that a three quarter ton pickup truck was going to run head on into my son's Toyota Celica, I would have long before bought a camcorder and taken hours of audio and video. Lights; Camera; Action! The opening scene is me yelling, "Can you quiet down a little? You're sounding great, but those drums are going to drive the neighbors crazy." No answer. Next scene: in his room, head-set on, eyes closed, tongue showing, intensity high, drumsticks alive with action. Next scene: At the soccer field. I'm feeling the pride of watching my half-back move the ball down the field, demonstrating his years of experience. Next scene: Middle of the night. I wake up to go to the bathroom; pass by his room. I see the light from the computer screen. "Jeremy, you've got to go to school in the morning. Turn that thing off." Fade out, regrets. I didn't have a camcorder.

Often, just when I'm struggling with trying to remember the details, the minute details, I'll have one of those experiences. It's something that I'm hesitant to tell anyone about, partly because it feels so private and partly because I fear I won't be understood. I'll be sleeping, and he'll come to me. Instantaneously my senses take in his presence; all of who he is. I feel the weight of his body against me as we

hug. I see his eyebrows that almost, but not quite, meet. I smell that smell that is his alone. I hear his voice, oh so familiar. I find myself surprised that he is so real. I used to awaken disappointed that it was "only" a dream. Today, nine years after his death, I treasure these infrequent experiences. While I don't understand it, and I have no explanations, each time it happens I believe I have spent a brief time in the presence of my son. I thank God I don't have to rely only on faded memories.

*Judi Simmons Estes,
Prairie Village, Kansas*

Hard Times

How to hold on and how to let go... How to lose and how to keep... These are hard problems for the bereaved parent. We want to keep the child in our life, we want to remember the child, we want to save those parts of our life which are tied to the child. Yet, at the same time, we know that the child is dead - things cannot be as they were before.

The end of the grief process is a resolution of this tension between holding on and letting go. We can remember and be sad; we can remember and be happy; we can remember and just be. But it takes a long time for such a resolution to happen and while we are in the process, we find ourselves pulled to one side and then to the other.

Sometimes we want to leave the room exactly as it was. Other times we want to put everything away so nothing reminds us of the child. Sometimes we want to talk over and over again about the events of the death; other times we want to avoid the topic altogether. Sometimes, when all we have left of our child is our sadness, we don't want to give up our grief for fear of giving up on our child. bring pain; the memories of the bad times raise guilt and feelings of powerlessness.

All that is a normal process. We go through it at any death. When our parent dies, the problem is how to hold onto our childhood and youth and yet

give up our childhood and youth. So, we find ourselves keeping a bit of our parents in ourselves by becoming a little more like them. I was once talking about this in a class when, suddenly, a woman blurted out, "So, that's why I wanted to use the good china so much a year after she died!" It is a lot harder to give up the child and keep the child at the same time because, when our parents die, we have to lose and keep our past. When our child dies, we have to lose and keep our future.

In our grandparent's day, losing a child was an expected part of life. But it is not in our time. Few of us ever knew anyone else to whom it happened. So we have few models. Each of us seems to have to find out our own way for ourselves. It is a hard and lonely journey. But the experience of others who have gone down this valley is that there is a resolution at the end. We can hold on and let go. If we can, for a moment, share with others on the same journey, we can help others find directions and let them help us.

That is what Bereaved Parents is all about.

Dennis Klass, Ph.D.,

Former Advisor to BP/USA From A

Journey Together Volume XII No. 1 Winter 2007

The Gate to Tomorrow

There is a gate that each of us has unknowingly passed through. This gate opens only one way.... once we have passed through this gate we cannot return to the other side. Each of us stepped through the gate at a different time and in a different way. This gate opens to the world of parents whose children have died; it is their gate to every tomorrow.

There is no other place that compares to life in this world beyond the gate; there is no sorrow like the sorrow inside this gate. The numbing pain and perpetual agony we experience when first stepping through this gate are so overwhelming that we often don't immediately realize that there will be no return. But we will never return to life before the gate.

The new world inside the gate is populated with friends who are strangers and strangers who are friends. Our perspective on life has changed forever. Few of our friends from life before the gate will linger with us now; these people are now the strangers. Our pain is all encompassing; they have lives to live, things to do, plans to make, happiness to capture. We are no longer a part of their picture. Rare is the friend who stands by us in the

gate.... stands by us until one of us dies inside the gate.

The strangers who are now friends live inside the gate with us. Some have just come through the gate; others have been here a long, long time. But these strangers who are now our friends share our experience; they understand our need to talk about our children, each life and each death. They applaud our tiny advances toward acceptance and serenity and peace. Although we can never go back to life before the gate, we now have our compassionate friends. They listen carefully to stories about our children. They know our child's name better than they know our name. And that's how we want it to be.... Remember our children. Remember with us.
Annette Mennen Baldwin;
Katy, TX TCF, (in memory of Todd Mennen)

Michigan Basket

As in the past, we would like to have a Michigan basket to be a part of the silent auction at the National Conference. Donations should represent our state. Gail asked that it not include bottles of wine or large breakable items, as the basket has to be transported on a plane.

If you have questions or want to make a donation, please see Gail or Kathy.

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.

- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "In memory of our sons "Ryan 'Ryfro', Tom Jr. & Bryan 'Bryfro' Soupis", considered a son to our family. And Bryan 'Bryfro' Soupis on his angel day 4/2"
- ♥ Matt & Cindy Stevens "Today, Tomorrow, Forever. Love you Justin. Mom & Matt"
- ♥ John & Angie Wolf "Happy 26th Birthday Bryan. Love forever Mom & Dad!"
- ♥ Susan Steinberg "In memory of Shannon"
- ♥ Ray & Michele Schmidt "In loving memory of our niece, Erika Anstett on her 35th birthday. Forever in our hearts!"
- ♥ Vince & Sylvia Fregonara "Michael, we are made of star dust, save a spot for us." Love, Mom, Dad & Bradbury"

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.

Jaelene Brooks, whose beloved daughter, **Mary**, Born 6/5; Died 11/11; 15 years

Jennifer and Christopher Miller, whose beloved daughter, **Natasha**, Born 11/17; Died 11/10; 21 years

Tonya Napolitano, whose beloved daughter, **Tiah**, Born 10/11; Died 7/11; 25 years

Fran Relyea, whose beloved son, Patrick Daniel Murphy, Born 11/2; Died 12/6; 41 years

Deborah Roe, whose beloved son, **Robert Leighton**, Born 10/21; Died 2/8; 45 years

Missy and Greg VanCoppennolle, whose beloved daughter, **Kayla**, Born 12/9; Died 1/2; 16 years

SIBS

COURAGE

My brother died three years ago when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident when he fell while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and

live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said, "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

I do not make choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe is right and important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me,

because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me.

Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone. I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

Patricia Kelley
TCF Richmond, VA

Those Days

There are those days
Stuck in my own world
When the pain consumes me
It penetrates to my heart
Blurring my thoughts
Striking the depths of my soul
The emptiness seems never-ending
The loneliness makes me restless
Reality is too intense
Then a smile sneaks onto my face
And I am reminded
Of what a blessing he truly was
And that there is hope
Kelsey Logan

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

Dave and 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

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

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

Pinckney TCF Chapter: The Christian House of Prayer, 9949 McGregor Road, Pinckney, MI; 2nd Monday of the month, 6 - 8 pm; Jimmy Batchelor - 734-277-9705

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
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Gaylord, MI 49735

April 2017

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



April Craft Day

Our craft this month will be a glass pendant with a photo on it. We are meeting at St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church on April 29, 2017 from 10 am to 1 pm. You will need to send a photo to Gail via email address: angel4gail2016@gmail.com or you may bring a photo to the meeting so we can scan and print it out. Make sure you write your name on the back of the photo so it can be returned. We need your photo to Gail or Kathy by April 24th because there is one process that needs to be completed before the craft day on April 29th. If you have any questions, please contact Gail or Kathy.