

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



December 2020
Volume 32, Number 12

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

Chapter Leader

Joyce Gradinscak
Mary Hartnett
Cindy Stevens
(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:

December 3- see info about meeting
on this page.

No Craft Day

*See info about Annual Candle Lighting
on page 7*

December 15 - 6:30 pm - Chapter
Dinner: TCF Dinner-at Richard's
Family Restaurant, 39305 Plymouth
Rd., Livonia 48150.
Call Kathy 734-306-3930 or
katjrambo@gmail.com

A Note from our Chapter Leadership

Our next meeting will be on December 3rd!

An in-person Candle Lighting will be held at the church in the parking lot starting at 7:00 pm and will last about an hour. Restrooms will not be available since we cannot meet in the church. Please dress warm!

We know that this Holiday season is hard on all who are grieving and double hard with the Covid 19 situation and we are here to show support to those who need it.

Please take good care of yourselves ... and be safe.

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE, WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Candles in December

My sadness seems reflected in the music that I hear ..

Every young one's glowing face reminds me you're not here.

Shoppers crowd the festive stores; emotions all run high

This world I was a part of once, before that sad July.

This season's meant for happy times; for love, warm hearts, and cheer.

But grieving families 'round the world remember those not here.

We struggle through the season, lighting candles to proclaim

Our children aren't forgotten, 'round the world our candles flame.

I slowly pass through gates thrown wide one clear, cold Christmas Day.

No toys or playthings do I bring- those gifts of yesterday.

I carry with me just a polished heart of granite made

And walk with grief to where she lies in a silent, silvered glade.

"Merry Christmas, love," I whisper the quiet words seem so forlorn.

"I've brought my heart for you to keep, my gift this Christmas morn.

It is filled with all my love, though this one's carved of stone ..

I'll place it here - it will be near -you'll never be alone."

We parents don't forget, my love; this month we will unite

To honor all we'll light a wall of candles through the night.

The world will know our memories glow with love that's deep and true

We'll stand as one, and 'fore it's done the Heavens will know, too.

Please keep my gift, beloved child, close to where you lie,

And know my love surrounds you 'til the day I too shall die.

(Continued on pg 4) 1

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

Names available only to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

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.

- ♥ Lisa Brown "In memory of Kloe. Merry Heavenly Christmas. Mimi loves you!"
- ♥ Judy Cappelli "In memory of my son Christopher. Happy Heavenly Birthday to my son Christopher, as each day passes I miss you more and more. Forever loved, forever missed but never forgotten. I Love You, Mom"
- ♥ Ken & Eve Ventura "In memory of Kristen. Our hearts still hurt"
- ♥ Faye & John Heller "In memory of John Desmond Heller II. Love and miss you always Johnny!"

On the tenth of December my candle's
flame will light

I pray you'll see the love we'll free
into the starry night.

Sally Migliaccio

Starting Over Again

As parents, how many times have we told our children to try, try again? "You can do it, just start over," we'd say, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, learning to tie shoes, school assignments, or later the other difficulties that life brings.

Little did we think that this well meaning advice we gave out of love and concern for our children's well being would be the words that we now must follow. Hang on. Don't give up. Try again and start over. All this now applies to us. Had the situation been reversed we could not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue on, not in constant sorrow, but with hope for renewal and better days ahead. As we have said to them, they would be throwing right back to us, it is a very hard road that you must travel, but you can do it. What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to, to find your way out of the dark tunnel and when you fall, pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it. What we wanted for our children is not less than they would want for us. If we could hear them right now, they would be saying "LIVE, for life is but a moment", "LOVE, for that is what really matters", and go on for we shall be together again some day.

Mary Ann Lambden,

TCF/Gloucester County, NJ

Recipe for Recovery

As many of us go about preparing our Holiday dinners, don't we wish we had a "Recipe for Recovery?" "Just add a cup of boiling water, stir well and drink," and our grieving would be over. Our society seems to crave "instant answers," but bereavement is

a long process, and there are no easy solutions. Yet, I couldn't help imagining what I would put in my own "Recipe for Recovery,"

Start with one cup of the MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS - all those dear friends who did not turn away from me when they heard of Steve's suicide; but helped in many practical, caring ways to make the first months easier.

Add several GOOD EGGS - helping professionals like my minister, the counselor who suggested TCF and the young funeral director couple who organized the TCF Chapter I attended in New York.

Throw in a few heaping tablespoons of READING MATERIALS - Books and pamphlets from the TCF Library that started my thoughts going in a positive direction.

Add THE SALT OF THE EARTH - wonderful new friends I met through TCF and other support groups. Maybe we should call them THE CREAM OF THE CROP, because eventually they rise to the top.

Sprinkle liberally with TEARS - because it's okay to cry and generously with LAUGHTER - because we can learn to smile again.

Bake in a warm oven of TENDER LOVING CARE. Be sure to make enough to share with others and freeze some for later.

That's my recipe - what's yours?

Cynthia Kelley,

TCF/Cincinnati, OH

Tabloids

The line in the grocery store was long that day, leaving plenty of time to scan the magazines positioned near the checkout counter to catch the attention of restless, impatient customers. "Flatten Your Tummy," "Lose 40 Pounds in 30 Minutes with Our Amazing New Diet," "Eat Prune Pits for a healthy Sex Life," and on and on.

I thought about parents in grief. And I know the response most of us have in the early weeks, months and years of grief: What does it matter? Why should I be concerned about health?

Life takes on a different meaning after a child dies. We feel like we will never again care if our tummies are flat and our muscles are strong.

If there had been an article on the rack that day about getting up when I'm not sure if I can walk, drinking water when I cannot even swallow, breathing in and out without sighing, waking up or going to sleep without flashbacks, staying silent when my heart wants to scream ... I would have bought it.

Alice Monroe,

TCF/CO

A Tree Full of Memories

Christmas was my absolute favorite time of the entire year. Every nook and cranny was filled with Yule adornment. Not a corner of the house was safe from this self-proclaimed Christmas Freak! One year we even hung assorted ornaments on a fake palm tree, lovingly dubbing it the "Bahama-Mama" tree, because in our family one Christmas tree was never enough. The kids even had small tabletop trees in their rooms. Our upstairs tree was the decorator tree, the one with the fancy, color coordinated ornaments, to be handled by no one but me. The downstairs tree was the family favorite and trimmed by the children. Hanging from its branches were the ornaments that I had purchased every year for each of them from the time they were born. I always looked forward to finding just the right one that would represent their individual interests at that particular time in their lives. But as each of us knows, the holidays, as we knew them, forever changed after our precious children died. And so it was for us the Christmas of 1995, our first without Nina's shining presence. I was quite positive that I would never decorate again. It was far too painful.

Yet, something happened three Christmases ago. One night I lay in Nina's daybed, staring at the ceiling thinking Scrooge-like thoughts, wishing it was January 2nd and I could put

the holidays behind me for another year. Suddenly, I found myself rise from her bed and walk to the closet where all the holiday paraphernalia was stored. I searched furiously until I found what I was looking for--a box marked "Nina's Xmas Ornaments." I brushed away the collected dust and carried it up the stairs to the corner of the living room where a forlorn and neglected-appearing 2-foot tree stood. I recall sitting on the floor in front of the tree, sighing deeply, and gingerly opening the box, I was afraid what the depth of my emotions would be when I saw those long untouched ornaments of Christmases past; afraid of the feelings that I had learned to hide so well from the rest of the world; afraid the floodgates would open and the tears would never stop.

I carefully lifted the cover and tenderly held each one in my hands. I found myself recalling the beautiful memories of previous Christmases when my beloved daughter was alive. There was the pink and white checked fabric baby buggy with pipe cleaner handles of her first Xmas, followed by Teddy bears with Santa hats, and crocheted Sesame Street characters from

her toddler days. There were the priceless picture ornaments taken by her nursery school teacher showing 4-year old Nina with the then blond, wispy hair and blunt cut bangs grinning back at me. There were the handmade ones from early grade school that she affectionately created with felt and glitter; the violin and piano ornaments symbolizing her musical attempts; the self-explanatory Shop-til-You-Drop ornament; the more sophisticated ornaments for a teenage Nina, and finally the last one before her death at 15-years old commemorating her reign as our city's Miss Teen. I gently held them, reliving the stories behind each one and savoring the precious memories they brought with them as I placed them on the tiny tree. I then unearthed from hiding the ornaments bought after her death. Even then, I couldn't bear to stop buying them for her. There I found dark-haired angels and butterflies of every shape and color, now symbolizing her new and eternal life, and appropriately hung them alongside the others.

Though tears fell as I cautiously placed them on the bare branches of the tiny tree, I felt familiar warmth

radiate throughout my body, thawing the coldness in my heart and soul. I smiled, knowing in my heart that this was a Christmas gift coming directly from Nina. I felt it was her way of telling me that perhaps it was time to find some peace and hope again in the holiday season. Not that it would or could ever be the same as it was before 1995, or that I would ever stop missing her presence, but perhaps now begin to remember some of the joy found in priceless memories of holiday's past.

If you are in the early years of your grief, you believe you will never again feel any amount of enjoyment in the holidays. However, allow myself and other seasoned grievers to be the bearers of hope. At one time we felt just like you. When you feel ready for even a spark of pleasure in the holidays, let it return to your heart again. I sincerely believe our children want us, in time, to accept their spirit gifts of renewed joy, peace, and hope sent to us from them with love.

With peace and gentle thoughts through this holiday season and always,
Cathy L. Seehueter,

Plan your own Candle Lighting

during the 24th Worldwide Candle Lighting on December 13, 2020 (held on the 2nd Sunday in December).

We wanted to offer some ideas on how you can have your own Candle Lighting at home since we cannot safely hold our Worldwide Candle Lighting at Kellogg Park this year.

Our National organization will be offering an online virtual candle lighting and our dear friend, Alan Pedersen will be offering his candle lighting via facebook.

These are some ideas to remember your child, grandchild or sibling during the holidays and also bring the Worldwide Candle Lighting into your home (light your candles at 7 pm on December 13th and keeping them lit for an hour). During this pandemic we have had to become creative in some of the special TCF traditions we have shared since the death of our child.

1. Have a candle lighting in your backyard with some close friends and/or family.
2. Decorate one of the trees in your yard with memories of your child.
3. Some families have a separate Christmas tree inside for their child decorated with ornaments of items your child loved.
4. Have a special candle lighting inside your home, remembering your child and being with your family.
5. You can plan a zoom session with family or friends if they are zoom techy. Candles can be lit in your own home.
6. TCF National will be providing a candle lighting on line, please go to the National website: compassionatefriends.org for more information.
7. Alan Pedersen will be providing a candle lighting on his facebook page. Go to "Angels Across the USA" for more information, 12-13-2020 at 6:30 p.m.
8. Don't forget to make your own ornament and place on the Memory Trees (sponsored by our chapter) in Kellogg Park, Plymouth MI.

SIBS

A Holiday To Do List:

As a reflection back on the past 13 (Wow! has it really been that long?!) Christmases, I would like to share some ways that I have handled the holidays, as well as some additional thoughts. This time of the year is bittersweet for me now, as opposed to the first Christmas without my older brother, David. That was the worst. At any rate, I can handle November and December much better now. I suppose I've learned a little along the way, and gained strength each year. Nonetheless, the anniversary of his death always gets to me. Unfortunately, it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas on December 9th. Here's my list of suggestions for honoring a

sibling whom you have lost, and on simply making it through yourself:

1. Hang that stocking. Go ahead. Put up your sibling's stocking. It isn't as though your brother or sister never existed, and isn't still a part of your life.
2. Write a poem or letter to your sibling and put it in the stocking.
3. Put up a tree, or continue with your holiday traditions. Yes, this is VERY difficult. But for most of our siblings, this was their favorite time of year. Celebrate how blessed you have been to have had your sister or brother for holidays past. Decorate the way THEY would have wanted to, instead of the way you would do it.
4. Create a "memory" box. This is simply a box of belongings from your sibling, or pictures of your sibling, etc. Wrap it in festive holiday paper, and

put it under your tree if you have one.

5. Buy a gift for your sibling. Maybe it is something they truly would have wanted for the holidays, maybe it's something the two of you would have enjoyed together or gotten a good laugh out of. This can be VERY therapeutic.

6. Go somewhere that your sibling would have wanted to go--the beach, a movie they would have liked, a favorite restaurant, wherever. "Share" this time with your sibling. This is also good on their birthday. Celebrate that they had a life and that they are a part of yours!

7. Bake a favorite holiday goody of your sibling's.

8. Get together with your family and cry (and LAUGH it's OK to do this) at some great family memories from years past that involved your sibling. Share thoughts on great places you may have visited for the holidays, or anecdotes of you and your sibling trying to peek at what your gifts were ahead of time.

9. Put together a photo album of your sibling. This could be of your sibling's life in general, or of a specific subject, like the sport your sibling played, or holidays past.

10. Give your album to your parents. Cry (and LAUGH!) at the pictures and the memories they generate.

I hope that you are blessed this holiday season, and that my suggestions are helpful. Please know that the holidays get easier with time, and that you WILL make it through, even though it may seem impossible.

Amy Baker Ferry,

TCF/Heart of Florida Chapter

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

Marlene 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)969-0010; 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

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, Marsha & Jeff DiCenzo 517-918-5608 & 517-358-1883



PLEASE REMEMBER

Siblings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least

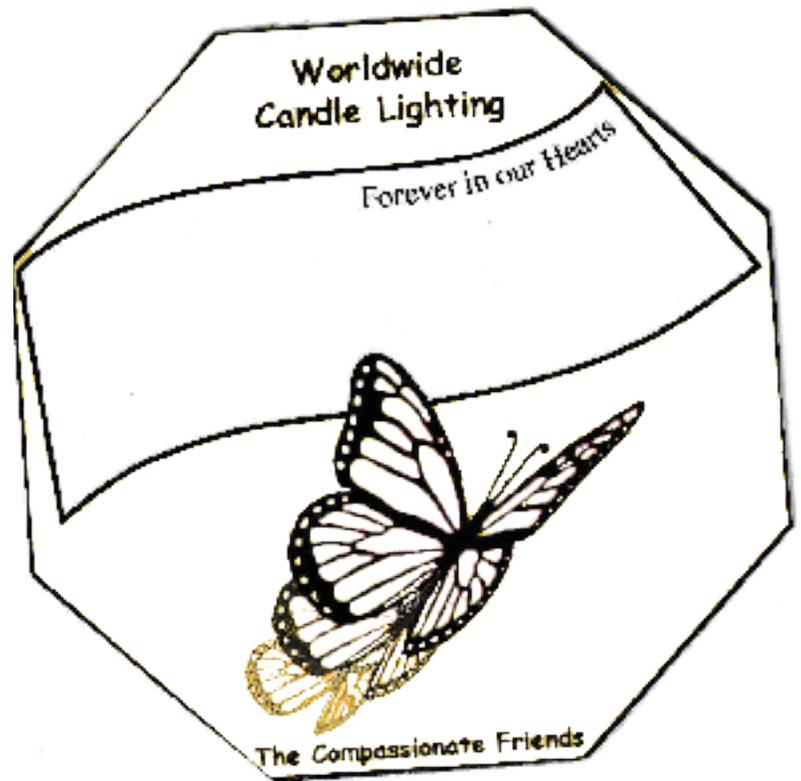
Livonia Chapter Page

Directions for making your own ornament:

You can use the ornament template provided as is, cut it out and decorate with your child's name, a picture, stickers and/or the year 2020. Please do not use any birth or death dates.

You can also cut it out, trace it onto different paper like scrapbook paper or cardstock, and then decorate as you like.

The next step is to laminate or use clear contact paper so that the ornament can be sealed and sustain our Michigan weather. Laminate and/or contact paper can be purchased at local stores and the office stores will laminate for you. You need to leave approximately ½" edge around the ornament so water cannot reach the ornament. Make a small hole at top on the laminate and put wire or string in the hole and attach it to the Memory tree.



The Walk Of Trees

"The Walk of Trees" will still be held by the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce in Kellogg Park and our chapter will be a part of this as in prior years. We have decided to do the ornaments for the Memory Trees a little different this year. We will be asking any family who would like to have an ornament on the tree to make their own and place it on one of the trees. We will offer a template in our newsletter (see above) and you can be creative with this template or design your own. There will be a size stipulation (no larger than 5"x 5") for the ornament and we can give some ideas. You may also purchase an ornament of your choosing, but remember the trees are in an open park and there is a possibility of it being removed. November 21, 2020 will be the first day you may place your ornament on the Memory Trees. Please be respectful of other families who will be participating in this new way of remembering our loved ones on our Memory Trees.

If you have any questions, please call one of the following: TCF # 734-778-0800, Joyce 734-560-6883, Mary 313-550-5410 or Cindy 734-837-3722.

UPDATE ON 24th WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING FOR OUR CHAPTER 2020

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting held on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 13th, 2020 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Since the corona virus is still an issue, we will not be allowed to hold our Candle Lighting at Kellogg Park in Plymouth, Michigan this year. See suggestions on having your own candle lighting on page 5.

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.

Keia Garrett, whose beloved son, **Ja'Qai**, Born 9/25; Died 9/18; 16 years

Sandra Riley, whose beloved son, **Michael**, Born 12/9; Died 7/25; 40 years

Kimberly Giovannini whose beloved daughter, **Ava**, Born 12/05; Died 8/31; 8 months

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

December 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

