

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



January 2021
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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:

January 7 see info about meeting on
this page.

No Craft Day

January 19 - 6:30 pm - Chapter
Dinner: **TBD** - check the Livonia
Chapter Facebook page.
Call Kathy 734-306-3930 or
katjrambo@gmail.com

A Note from our Chapter Leadership

Our next meeting will be on January 7, 2021!
We will have a virtual meeting via Zoom starting at 7 pm.

Our meeting place, St. Timothy's Pres. Church, is still limiting our group from using the church. Please contact Gail (angel4gail2016@gmail.com) if you are interested in being included in our **Zoom** meetings. Your email addresses will be kept on file to use on any future Zoom meetings.

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

WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE, WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

"Wishes For Bereaved Parents For The Coming Year"

- To the Newly Bereaved, we wish you patience -patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead.
- To the Bereaved Siblings, we wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication.
- To Those Of You Who Are Single Parents, we wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss.
- To Those Of You Who Are Plagued With Guilt, we wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances and that your child knew that.
- To Those Of You Who Have Suf-

fered Multiple Losses, those who have experienced the death of more than one child, we wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life again.

- To Those Of You Who Are Deeply Depressed, we wish you the first steps out of the "valley of the shadow."
- To Those Experiencing Marital Difficulties after the death of your child, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.
- To All the Fathers, we wish you the ability to express your grief, to move beyond society's conditioning, to cry.
- To Those With Few or No Memories Of Your Child, perhaps because you suffered through a stillbirth, a miscarriage, or infant death, we wish you the sure knowledge that your child is a person and **THAT YOUR GRIEF IS REAL.**

(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

Only available to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

- To Those Of You Who Have Experienced The Death of An Only Child or All Your Children, we offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.
- To Those Of You Unable To Cry, we wish you healing tears.
- To Those Of You Who Are Tired, exhausted from grieving, we wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.
- To All Others with Special Needs that we have not mentioned, we wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

Joe Rosseau,

Former National TCF President

StepParent Grief

Lauren Marshall, although not my biological daughter, was as special to me as my own daughter. Lauren died tragically January 30, 2000 as the result of an automobile accident at the age of 17, two months short of her 18th birthday and five months short of graduating from high school. This tragedy would most likely have been prevented if Lauren had worn her seat belt while traveling in her boyfriend's car. They encountered black ice conditions on a wintry road in Northern Virginia and hit an SUV head-on. Lauren hit the windshield while her boyfriend escaped with only a few scratches. This tragedy changed the lives of her Mother, Donna, and myself, forever. I knew Lauren for 15 years and was her Stepfather for nearly 6 years. As I said, I loved her as I did my own daughter and her death was probably the most tragic event that I had ever had occur in my life.

Upon Lauren's passing, Donna was put on the most horrific roller coaster ride. She was forced into the roller coaster's first car that had no brakes on tracks that had the steepest, fastest, sharpest, nerve racking and cruelest ups and downs and turns that seemed to never end. I have learned that fathers (and stepfathers) may be unable to join their grieving wife in that first car to give them comfort, compassion, and support they need. Regard-

less of the car that stepparents sit in, they are still going to experience the grief journey/ ride with their spouse. Their feelings and expressions of grief may be completely different, like the differences in the expressions of grief between a man and a woman, but they will both experience the same horrific ride.

My role as a stepfather changed dramatically when Lauren died, but I was bent on dealing with issues as the provider, the fix-it upper, and the doer in the family. I could handle "getting things done" but I was not equipped to handle the emotional issues that accompany the death of a child. I learned about these the hard way. But I also learned that we each have to deal with our own grief in our own individual way.

A stepparent may feel almost invisible to the spouse, other stepchildren, other family members, and friends. Assumptions seem to be that the stepparent, unlike the biological parent, can't possibly understand or feel the depths of the loss. This is so untrue. The fact remains that Stepparents do grieve for their step child - make no mistake about that.

Donna and I joined the Leesburg Chapter of TCF eight months following Lauren's passing. But the monthly TCF meetings, as well as grief counseling and marriage counseling for me, were not enough. It was not until our first national conference in Washington, D.C. in 2001 that we realized the extent to which 1,700 bereaved parents, stepparents, siblings, and grandparents can be so compassionate to strangers that shared a common bond. We have learned so much about the grief journey through the experiences of others that gave us hope and let us know we were on the path of establishing a new normal for our drastically changed lives. The bonding that took place at that first conference remains with us today. We look forward to meeting our new found friends from each conference and we have not missed an annual conference since 2001.

In the 19 years that I have attended the Annual TCF National Conference the organization has increasingly responded to the needs of Stepparents. At last years conference there were various workshops offered for stepparents. I attended one of those workshops that provided me a new button to wear that introduced the concept of a "Bonus Dad" for stepparents. I like the concept of "Bonus Dad and Bonus Child" much better than Step parent and step child.

I strongly recommend any stepparent join the Closed Face Book Group entitled "Loss of a Stepchild". The moderator for this group is Babe Muro. This group provides support and advice for all step parents after the death of a child.

The bottom line is the more we can learn from others the better it will help our own bereavement which in turn will enable us to help the newly bereaved parents that will follow us. (The Reverend Simon Steven's approach and TCF Credo in action.)
Ralph Goodrich, Lauren Marshall's "Bonus" Dad,

Former Co-Leader of Charlotte, NC TCF Chapter, and currently North and South Carolina Co-Regional Coordinator

Accepting the New Year

When we are grieving, it is hard enough to live each day as it comes. It can be daunting to face a whole New Year stretching out in front of us. We may be afraid of what the New Year might bring. We may worry whether or not we can handle any more challenges. Our current experience of emptiness and loneliness may make us reluctant to face a new year.

We might say to ourselves, "I used to be so busy. I used to feel so needed, so useful. Now it seems there's nothing but empty space and empty time." It's bad enough to wake in the morning not sure what we'll do with the day; what will we do with a whole year?

Longing to recover the past can sometimes make us struggle to be accepting of the New Year. The past was where we were comfortable, where we felt

safe, felt good. Grief burdens us today and we fear the New Year won't hold anything different for us. We pine for the person we miss and the precious past we shared. We think about how it was, and wish we were back there.

Approach of a new year may mean different things for different mourners. Whether we welcome, dread or ignore a new year probably depends on where we are in our grief process. The question is not whether, but how grief will show up, and how we'll work with it.

If your loss was recent, sudden or unexpected, you might experience it as a shock, as if you're living a bad dream or someone else's life, trying desperately to get back to your "old" life. The last thing on your mind might be the challenge of a new year.

Writing or talking repeatedly about the death of your loved one might make you feel numb or detached. Eventually, you might realize that your life is not what you thought it would be, that your world has changed.

Therese Rando, a noted grief therapist and author, describes grieving as a learning process. Each minute with a loved one created patterns of how to operate and what to expect. Each new challenge, like doing the taxes, fixing things, and going into a new year, becomes a fresh occasion to accept the absence of your loved one and find new ways to cope, even if new challenges bring fresh pain.

As you courageously work through your grief over time, you eventually will find the strength to look to the New Year with interest and wonder about what it might hold. Maybe you'll feel eager to welcome change, now that your grief has started to ease. You might find comfort and joy in knowing that you did all that you could and loved well. Enriched by the love you once enjoyed, you can now show deeper compassion for all who suffer. You eventually will recognize life as a gift to enjoy with whomever crosses your path. In time, you might want to do on your own what you both once hoped to accomplish together.

Even if you're scared and lonely, and

even if you long for the past, you can still open the door a crack to this New Year.

Tips to face the New Year:

◆ Begin by getting needed rest. If you're still exhausted from caregiving or from acute grieving, focus on physical recovery. Considering talking with your doctor about how to rebuild yourself physically.

◆ Give yourself a mental rest. Replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations about yourself, and soothe yourself with music, meditation, uplifting literature, tears and laughter.

◆ Pay attention to hope and desire. Find small practical ways to give yourself new pleasure.

◆ Attend a support group or talk with friends and family members who can list and share memories.

◆ Find courage to live into the future by living in the present, one day at a time. Do the best you can to care for yourself and others today.

Nagging Guilt in Child Loss

I should have known. I should have been there. I should have called, texted, spoken one more warning or given one more hug. Should. Should? Should!

I have yet to speak to a bereaved parent who does not harbor guilt of some kind over the death of his or her child. Not one.

Why didn't I know? What did I miss? Why didn't I say "I love you" one more time?

Hindsight being 20/20 means that there are always threads a heart can pull to guide it back to some moment when it should have been obvious what was about to happen.

We comb through days, months or years of evidence like a crime novel detective, determined to find the clue that unravels all the mystery surrounding our child's death.

Guilt is a relentless hound nipping at tired heels. I know there are circumstances where a parent may well be responsible in some measure for the

death of his or her child. If that's you, then I hope you have a good counselor to help you work through all those feelings. It will take a lot of time and a lot of effort, but it can be done.

But for many of us, the guilt is phantom pain. It has no basis in reality. There was nothing we did or didn't do that contributed to our child leaving this world. Nothing we could have done to prevent it. No way we could have known it was going to happen.

Running from guilt can keep a heart from doing the work grief requires. It can build barriers between us and the people that can help us most. It can lead our minds down a dark path into a bottomless pit.

Guilt is a thief and a liar.

Guilt will steal what I have left if I'm not very careful.

When my heart is overwhelmed by the "what ifs" and "shoulds" and "should-have-knowns", I scream, "Shut Up!"

I force my thoughts to turn instead to the things I know for sure:

- Dominic: was (is!) loved.
- He was (still is!): a beautiful, thoughtful and capable soul.
- His death was: an accident and nothing I could have done would have prevented it.
- This separation: is temporary.

I still have work to do and people to love and I can't do either if I'm obsessed with the past.

It's a costly act of will to stop the guilt soundtrack playing in my head.

But it's worth it.



SIBS

Why Losing Your Sibling Is Like Losing a Part of Yourself

If you're anything like me, you grew up in a fairytale surrounded by siblings who stood 10 feet tall. You grew up with parents who were as brave as superheroes. You grew up naïve to the world around you.

Don't get me wrong; I was well aware of what the news never failed to talk about. I knew mothers and fathers could lose their battles with cancer. I knew children could be kidnapped. I knew houses burned down, and car accidents happened almost every day.

But, I had created a world where my family was untouchable, where nothing

could ever happen to them because they were mine.

Five years ago, a police officer knocked on our front door. It was 10 pm, and I had just gotten ready for bed.

"There's been an accident. You need to come to the hospital right away."

By this point, I had seen enough TV shows to know this was not what you wanted to hear from a police officer, especially not at 10 pm, and especially not when your older brother still hadn't made it home.

I lost a brother that day. I lost a cheerleader, a mentor and a best friend.

The safe space I had created so easily disappeared, and I was left to tackle the world without the one person who had always paved a path before me.

There's no word to describe the loss

of a sibling. If you lose a spouse, you're a widow or widower. If you lose your parents, you're an orphan. But if you lose a sibling, you just become the girl who lost her brother.

My therapist described it as losing a limb. If someone tells you it gets better with time, the person's lying to you. Yes, cuts get better and wounds do heal, but when you lose an arm, it's foolish to await the day it "gets better." You simply learn to live with one arm.

I learned to do the things I know he would have liked. I learned to listen to the songs we sang together in the car without breaking down in tears. I learned — and am still learning — to function normally without him just a phone call away.

However, "normal" has lately been like a blanket too short for a bed. Sometimes it covers you just fine, and other times it leaves you shaking in the cold. I've come to find the worst part is I never know which one it's going to be when I wake up.

It's been almost five years since that day. Some days the ache is a little less than before, but other days it makes me want to lock myself in my room. And some days, I still feel like I am stuck in a void.

There is no statute of limitations on grief. There is no time limit to waking up crying, or having to leave the grocery store because you see your sibling's old friends. There is no special cure for those dull aches in your heart that don't seem to ever go away.

But, coming from a sister who thought she would never find the light again, know there will come a day when the thought of that loved one brings a smile to your face instead of leaving you gasping for a breath you cannot find.

(continued on pg 7)

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: 48660 Pontiac Trail, Wixom, MI 48393 Phone: 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 Thursday 7-9; 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

Thank you!

We want to thank everyone who helped with our December Chapter Meeting Candle Lighting in the parking lot behind the church.

Thank you to all who attended!



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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.

David & Pamela Langell, whose beloved son is **Joseph**

Bill & Dee Sidelko, whose beloved son is **Paul**

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.

- ♥ Dave & Sharon Carson "In memory of David Jones II. You are forever in our hearts and missed every single day. Love you always & forever"
 - ♥ V. Robert & Mary Vitolins "In memory of Laura. In loving memory of our beautiful daughter and sister, Laura. Love, Dad, Mom, and Karen"
 - ♥ Brendolyn Jasper "In memory of Jeffrey Parker. Happy Heavenly New Year (2021). Love Mom & Kimberlee"
 - ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens "In loving memory of our son Justin. Really can't believe it has been 8 years since we lost you. Always, always in our heart and prayers. Love ya so much, Mom & Matt"
 - ♥ Joyce Gradinscak "In memory of Adam. Adam after 16 years our hearts are still broken. Love, Mom, Dad, Jamie & Dave"
 - ♥ Elizabeth Golen "In memory of Andrew. Andrew we love & miss you every day! Your loving family"
 - ♥ Brenda Fields "In loving memory of Jordan John. Always on my mind! Love forever, Mom"
 - ♥ Carol Romeo "In memory of Marissa Kelly. We miss you forever. From all of us! Always."
-

continued from Sibling page

There will come a day when you find yourself talking about your sibling and you do not feel uncomfortable. There will come a day when the universe sends you a sign to let you know your sibling is doing OK. And there will come a day when the

19 years you were able to have with your sibling becomes enough for the 19 more you'll never have. There is no other love like the love for a brother, and no other love like the love from a brother. And if you're lucky to have a brother who was also your best friend,

that love is going to cover you during the best of times and hold your hand through the worst.

This article was written by Kady Braswell for Unwritten.

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

January 2021

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



One of the trees in Kellogg Park