

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



January 2018
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The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

Chapter Leader

Sally Cassidy
Joyce Gradinscak
Catherine Walker
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:

NEXT MEETING - Januar y 4- First time tables, sibling table, topic table: How did you react to the conversation with Grief? What are some things you would like to tell Grief?

January 16 - 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@gmail.com.

January 20 - Crafts - see page 8

Resolutions

Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them.

We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn't be better. Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions.

Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation.

Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it. Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become

more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

This newsletter is another way you can become more involved in our chapter. Let us know what works for you and what doesn't. Consider becoming a contributor. Tell us how we might be able to better serve your needs.

Have a happier New Year!

Pat Akery
TCF, Medford, OR

What is New About the New Year?

There is a lot of silliness about ringing in the New Year, and I have never been able to enter into the spirit with noisemakers, funny hats and loud hurrahs. Since the death of my son, I especially find myself wondering what this is all about. I think some of the partying and celebrating are motivated by a deep desire for a new start in our lives; a desire to leave behind some of the problems, sorrows, worries and pain of the year just ending. The

(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

Names available only to subscribers.



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.

Suzanne Kajder, whose beloved son; **Jason**, Born 7/02; Died 8/19; 28 years

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.

- ♥ John & Brenda Hernandez “In loving memory of our beautiful Courtney”
- ♥ Kathy Shinn “In memory of my son, Ryan”
- ♥ Brendolyn Jasper “Merry Christmas my Jeffrey, still miss you”
- ♥ V. Robert & Mary Vitolins “In memory of our beautiful daughter, Laura Vitolins”
- ♥ Joann Tappan “In memory of Kevin Joseph Tappan. Love and miss you every day, Mom”

short, sunless days and long, dark nights make us want something to cheer us. So we give the New Year's Eve party a try.

But it really doesn't work for most of us; we see now that we are just the same and the heaviness in our hearts, as we continue with the struggle to cope with the loss of our child, remains with us. Can we find new ways to live our lives in the New Year?

I'd like to suggest a few things we can try. Let's make an effort to find new friends. A good place to start this is at Compassionate Friends meetings. Here you are with a group of people who care about each other in special ways. We understand the pain and anger, the confusion and the inertia suffered by bereaved parents.

In the New Year, let's also find new ways to be close to the family that we have left. We feel regrets about hugs not given, letters not written, "I love you's" not said often enough. We can do all these things now. We can establish new memories with the family we have right now.

Another way to move into this New Year with a better feeling is to think about what we can do for others, because that is truly a way to help ourselves, too. If we can reach out to other sorrowing families, give a gift of our time, a note of love, a listening ear, or a shoulder to lean on, we'll grow stronger ourselves.

For those parents who are suffering the deep pain of the newly bereaved, none of the things I've mentioned may be possible yet. For you, I hold out the hope that soon your days will be just a bit better, your sorrow a little lighter, your tears healing, your friends strengthening and your memories filled more with the good times and less with the unhappiness of your grief.

Dory Rooker ~ TCF, Upper Valley, VT

DIALOGUE WITH GRIEF

Writer's note: This was an assignment I had for a writing course. We were told to pick an object in the room, perhaps a knick knack on a shelf and personify it, have a conversation with that object. As I put my pencil to paper, I began to write, not thinking, just writing and this conversation with grief, which I personified came forth. I imagine that my relationship changes as time passes. I don't believe that the grief changes, but how I perceive it, how I respond to it will change. It would be interesting to try this exercise in a few more years and see what perspective I might gain at that time.

Me: Hi Grief. I am supposed to dialogue with a topic I would like to write about. I think you might be too broad though and am wondering if I should just address a snippet of you.

Grief: I am all consuming but your teacher might think it is a bit too universal, too broad as you say.

Me: You are certainly an integral part of my life right now. I really can't imagine what life would be like without you.

Grief: I bet you wish you could remember don't you.

Me: I miss the person I was and wish you hadn't walked into my life. I wish David hadn't passed into the unseen. Wow, what an understatement.

Grief: But he did and I am here.

Me: You are cruel and I don't think this conversation is going anywhere

Grief: I think it is going wherever you want it to go and it might just not be right for your writing class.

Me: You might have something there, but I don't know if I feel like getting into the shadows today regarding you and your presence in my life.

Grief: I noticed that you often take that standpoint. You are on Facebook all the time, looking, searching for what? You keep checking your email. Don't you know that other people have lives? They are actually doing something with them?

Me: Yes, I know that and just writing it, even though I am writing it

and I suppose imagining it, thinking it, makes me feel anxious, tense, not measuring up. I do have a lot to do and much of it is on this computer. This has become my lifeline to the outside world in many respects. This isn't good, is it?

Grief: It is what it is. I might be one of the central themes of your life right now, but I don't think you can blame David's death on all that you are feeling.

Me: What am I feeling? Do you think I could carry you along and put you to work in my life rather than feeling like you are a boulder I am lugging along?

Grief: Yes. There is lots you can do and I am don't have to be the boulder. I can be the lens through which you see the world, the perspective from which you can measure the beauty of the sunset, the night sky, the sound of the wind and the stillness of a placid lake.

Me: You make it sound so poetic and yet, sometimes in my heart, I feel a storm raging and it blinds me to all the beauty that there is in the world. Instead I find myself mistrusting people, corporations, friendships.

Grief: That is why you must immerse yourself in the natural world. Gravity still works the same way it did before David died.

Me: I am slowly learning that, but still sometimes I step out into the world and I wonder how can the sky be so blue and the sun shine so brightly? It scares me sometimes. How can I appreciate and discover beauty when my heart aches so deeply?

Grief: You don't get to have one or the other, Kim. The sadness is now part of your life, part of who you are. Many folks say they don't want their grief defining them, but they are willing to let the initials of their academic accomplishments define them. They are willing to let their place in their families define them or any of the many hats they wear. I think it is another element of denial to think that you or any of them can push me aside, cram me into some compartment of your heart and say that I will not let

grief define me. Well, la de da de da. Then stop letting all the other aspects of your life define you. Stop saying, I am a gardener or I am a knitter or I am a doctor. All of those things give your life depth and breadth and I, grief, am just another one of those things. Yes, I seem to be all consuming in the beginning, but it slowly changes. You have noticed those changes already haven't you. Just think while you were writing this, you haven't felt the pain? Feel a bit guilty now? You have been distracted, you are creating this document and you are okay. We are conversing, but still, I am not debilitating. So use me, go ahead and use me if that helps you find satisfaction in your life

Me: Wow, you are right.

Grief: Course I am right.

Me: So, volunteering with the local Compassionate Friends will not have to define me?

Grief: No, you can't take it on and not have it define you. Weren't you listening? Yes, it will define one aspect of you, it will also nurture and enrich your life.

Me: Hmm...I could get excited about this.

Grief: Did you notice how your heart lightened up Kim? You are conversing with me and I just felt a bit of excitement in your plans, your thoughts.

Me: Yes, I noticed too. I don't think this conversation is going to help me write a creative piece, but it has been valuable.

Grief: Don't sell it short. There might be lots of great stuff in here to mine out, but you can always find some peeling statue to write about that belonged to so and so and then you are right back to me, grief, because you miss them. I am a foundation, a launching place. I am not all pain and agony. I am a kite string that connects you to your soaring loved one and as we continue our journey together, we will learn to keep that kite flying rather than all the crashing in the ground we tend to do right now. The point is you need to get that kite back in the air, keep trying and eventually, it might

take years and years, decades of years, we will keep it in the air together. I am not leaving you. I am with you always, but I can be your launching pad, one of your perspectives, one of your hats you wear and I promise to enrich your life, giving you depth, breadth, understanding and through your broken heart, compassion.

Me: Okay, let's get on with our day

Grief: I have other things I need to do. I need to get a turkey, clean the house up a bit, paint some trim and probably a list of other things. Want to come along?

Grief: Wouldn't miss it for the world. Let's let Joy know that we are heading out too.

Joy: Oh, I have been here the whole time Kim and Grief. Nice conversation. Mind if I get a bit more attention next time you two plan on talking?

Kim Bodeau,

Seasoned Grief

There used to be a point to summing

up a year just past, not as a personal accomplishment, but as a reflection. Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible thing to do. I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older.

With new years clean and full of possibilities, becoming another person seemed simple, another chance at getting it right, like a redemption, being forgiven for having blundered or been found wanting.

But death changed everything, without permission. Resolutions, made sincerely, broken quickly, offended my need to hold on to the past, to rewind life, fast backwards, so I could capture what I had lost.

Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas. And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must, I understood there would be another future, not the one I thought I had the right to expect but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.

Eva Lager, TCF,

In This Place

Brave hearts, you are here.

You have traveled a dreadful distance.

*You have come, seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.*

*In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others' expectations taken off.
Walk into these few hours as into an oasis
where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.*

*In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one's story may be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.*

*Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;
we do not count how many tears are shed.*

*Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage, for the long and winding road
we see ahead.*

*And those we love are pleased we are together,
smile down on us, and bless this day,
glad for every tiny step we are taking
as they send their light to guide us on our way.*

*Traveling with us as we journey onward,
sending strength for what the miles may bring,
they are a part of everything we do that matters—
in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry ~ written for those attending their first meeting.

SIBS

I never got a chance to say goodbye,
To tell you how much I love you
And needed you in my life.
Even though your body has left this
Earth and my pain is rife,
I have no doubts you will be with me
the rest of my life. I miss you...

I am grateful to have so many joyful
memories Mostly I will miss you making
me laugh until I cannot breathe,
Your intoxicating smile and charming
personality, Even your teasing,
Although somehow for you, I imagine
it was much too pleasing!
I miss you...

I will no longer be able to help you
pick out an outfit or fix your hair,

Be your best wingman
Or have you hold me in your arms
when I need a hug. You were my best
friend for so long,
And in just one phone call, you were
gone.
I miss you...

I know we didn't always get along But
somehow we always got past it
And our love for each other was unde-
niable.
I am proud to call you my big brother,
But it pains me to know I will never
have another.
I miss you...

It rips me apart to think how much
anguish you were in
And that, as your sister, there was
nothing I could do.
I just wanted to be there, a shoulder to

cry on
To ease your hurt, your pain, your
ache
But there is nothing I can do now; you
are never again to wake.
I miss you...

I simply just want you back,
But I know this is a want that can
never be fulfilled.
You will always be a part of me
No one, not even you, can take that
away.
My body aches, and nothing I do
seems to ease the
pain, which is lately all I can convey.
I miss you...

My heart is bleeding and I don't know
how to make it stop,
I just want someone to wake me up
and tell me this is all a dream
But it is not.

I feel as though our family is missing a
piece and is not whole
We are no longer five but only four.
I miss you...

I am angry and destroyed inside,
I feel pain, I feel sorrow, I feel empty.
I am mad at you for leaving me in this
world without my big Bubby,
For making me deal with this pain.
Sometimes it is too much and I cannot
restrain.
I miss you...

But that is me being selfish because I
know, deep down That this is what you
needed to do.

To end your suffering (which no one
could have understood),
And finally you can be at peace with
yourself and the world and be happy,
You can finally sleep now, my big
Bubby.
I miss you...

I will mourn your death until I can no
longer breathe
And know the days will get easier
(although I don't see how).
But know you have left an impact on

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 Thursday 7-9; 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.



my life, as well as many others
You have made me stronger

I couldn't have asked for a better big
Brother. I miss you...

I never doubted your love for me,
And I know you knew
That I never, nor will I ever, stop
loving you.
My life will not be the same without
you,
so I must forge on
Goodbye does not mean that you are
gone.
I miss you...

I wish I could have been there to hold
your hand,
To comfort you for
Your one last breathe
Go in peace, take a bow
Sleep, my Bubby, and rest now.
I will ALWAYS miss you...
Kara Marie Sheehan
TCF Cincinnati-East, OH
In Memory of my brother, Eric Collin
Sheehan (Bubby)

Love and Hope
On a cold winter day the sun went out
Grief walked in to stay
I turned away from the unwanted guest
And bid him be on his way.
Grief was merciless, he brought his
friends,
Loneliness, Fear and Despair.
They walk these rooms unceasingly
In the somber cloaks they wear.
Every so often now,
Love pays a call
She always has Hope by her side
I welcome Love as well as Hope
For I thought surely they had died.
Love counsels Grief in a most gentle
way
Bids him be still for a while
Then Love walks with me through
memory's hall
And for a time...I can smile.
Kerry Marston, TCF,
Grand Junction, CO

*Grieving is Like Having Broken Ribs,
On the Outside, You look Fine
But With Every Breath, it Hurts.*
~Greg Behrendt

Memories

New Year's Wishes For Bereaved Parents

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 who are single parents: We wish you the inner resources we know
you will need to cope alone with your loss.

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 those who have suffered the death of more than one child: We wish you
the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once
again.

To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or of
all your children: We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an
inspiration to the rest of us.

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 are deeply depressed: We wish you the first
steps out of the 'Valley of the Shadow'.

To all mothers, fathers, and those of you unable to cry: We wish
you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

To those of you who are 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, the assurance that you are not alone,
and that you are loved.

From your Chapter Leadership

*We want to thank everyone who helped
us with our event this year. Thanks
goes to the City of Plymouth and Chris
Porman for the use of beautiful Kellogg
Park; the Sinagra's and Jeff Reynolds
from American Speedy Printing for the
ornaments; Kevin Moss and Theresa
Flores for the printing of our candle
lighting programs; Jamie Fiegler for
signing our event; all the parents who
showed up to complete the ornaments
and drive to the park to decorate the
trees; Cindy Stevens for the reading of
the poem, Gail Lafferty for the Lighting
of the Candle, Rhonda Temple & Mary*

*Hartnett for reading of the names;
Rhonda Temple & Catherine Walker
for the power point presentation, Kathy
Rambo & Joyce Gradinscak for keeping
the new ornaments added to the trees;
those who helped with new additions to
the list and questions that night and all
who were helpful in their own special
ways. Most of all...we thank all those
who made the trip to the park that
evening. And we light our candles...
In memory of our beautiful children,
grandchildren and siblings who have
died to soon.. so that their light may
always shine.*

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

January 2018

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



The Craft Group will be making angel pins. The cost is \$3.00. We will be meeting at St Timothy church. Saturday January 20th, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. If you have any questions please contact Kathy Rambo at 734 306-3930 or e-mail at Katjrambo@gmail.com. Samples and sign up sheet will be at the January meeting.

