

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



January 2017
Volume 29, Number 1

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 -January 5 - New
members, siblings, topic tables:

Topic: How have you changed to a
"new" normal?

January 21 - Craft Day - see pg. 8

January 17 - 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.

Wishes For Bereaved Parents for the New 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 others' 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 experiencing marital difficulties: After the death of your child, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

To those of you 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 all of 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 of the "Valley of the shadow."

To all 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 and the assurance that you are loved.

Joe Rousseau
TCF President 1990

As We Face A New Year

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them:

· _Let's not try to imagine the future—take one day at a time.

· _Allow yourself to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.

· _Don't shut out family and friends from your thoughts and feelings.

· _Share these difficult times. You may all become closer for it.

· _Try to be realistic about your expectations—of yourself, your spouse, other

(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

Let Us Celebrate Their Births



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, a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. The money from Love Gifts is the main source of income for the Livonia Chapter, and allows the chapter to send out newsletters, rent meeting space, and reach out to those newly bereaved. See new Love Gift form on back page.

PLEASE FORWARD LOVE GIFTS TO: THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS,
C/O: RHONDA TEMPLE, 25164 Hanover St., Dearborn Heights, MI 48125



- ♥ Charles & Jeri Baron Feltner "In loving memory of Larry & Sunrise"
- ♥ Cheryl Putz "In memory of Eric. Merry Christmas Eric"
- ♥ Sonny & Brenda Fields "In memory of Jordan John. Always in our hearts, we miss you every day! Love, Mom and Dad"
- ♥ V. Robert & Mary Vitolins "In memory of Laura. Remembering Laura's birthday and wishing each and every day that she could still be with us. Love Mom, Dad & Karen"
- ♥ Matt & Cindy Stevens "In memory of Justin. You were our heart & soul. Missing you so very much. Merry Christmas"
- ♥ Dennis Still "In memory of Katie"
- ♥ Brendolyn Jasper "In memory of Jeffrey Parker. Merry Xmas Mama's Baby"
- ♥ Sue Wobig "To my son Michael Ryan. We will always love you & miss you"
- ♥ Norm & Laverne Jinerson "In memory of Brian. Happy Birthday dear son. We miss you so much. Love, Mom & Dad"

family members and friends. Each one of us is an entity, therefore different. So, how can there be perfect understanding?

· _When a good day comes, relish it, don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last—it WILL come again and multiply.

· _Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles.

· _Drink lots of water, eat properly, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body to heal, as well as your mind.

· _Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends and let them share with you. As you find you are caring about the pain of others—you are starting to come out of your shell and that's a very healthy sign.

I know these won't be easy, but what has been? It's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

Grief Triggers

It occurred to me that a good part of traveling our journey is spent managing "grief triggers". In the beginning, after our child's death, life itself is a trigger. Just breathing and going through the motions of everyday life triggers the gut wrenching sadness and emptiness of life without our child.

Then as time goes on we start to notice that not every minute of the day is consumed by grief. We start to spend time crawling out of the pit of darkness into the light. We start to realize that we CAN live and that while even though we think of our child all the time we recognize the situations that "trigger" our grief. It may be seeing another child who reminds us of ours or discovering a picture of our child or a note or a video. At first these triggers completely take us off guard and throw us back in the pit.

But after awhile, we learn how to "manage" these triggers. Some of us avoid them altogether, such as not going to the cemetery or putting away the pictures. Some of us purposely

look for the triggers because now we are strong enough to handle the emotion. Some of us cautiously make sure we always have a way out of a situation that might throw us into the grief.

Normal

It is amazing what can become normal to us...

Normal for me is trying to decide what to take to the cemetery for Christmas, Birthday, Valentine's day and Easter.

Normal is also not hardly being able to bare the thought of Jesus dying on the cross because of what it did to his mother.

Normal is that extra chocolate Easter bunny sitting on the counter because you always get your children a chocolate bunny, and this year you still bought one for the one who is not here.

Normal is sitting at the computer crying, sharing how you feel with chat buddies who have also lost a child.

Normal is feeling like you know how to act and are more comfortable with a funeral and being at the cemetery where your son is buried, than a wedding or a birthday party. Yet, feeling a stab of pain in your heart when you smell the flowers, see that casket, and all the crying people.

Normal is feeling like you can't sit another minute without getting up and screaming cause you just don't like to sit through church anymore. And yet feeling like you have more faith and belief in God than you ever have had before.

Normal is going to bed feeling like your kids who are alive got cheated out of happy cheerful parents and instead they are stuck with sober, cautious people,

Normal is having tears waiting behind every smile when you realize someone important is missing from all the important events in your families' life.

Normal is not sleeping very well because a thousand what ifs' and why didn't I's' go through your head constantly.

Normal is having the TV on the minute I wake up and the last thing on before I go before I go to sleep at night, the need for noise because the silence is deafening.

Normal is every happy event in my life always being backed up with sadness lurking close behind because of the hole in my heart.

Normal is each year coming up with the difficult task of how to honor your child's memory and their birthday and survive those days. And trying to find the balloon or flag that fits the occasion.

Happy Birthday? Not really.

Normal is my heart warming and yet sinking at the sight of that ugly plant in the front flower bed Normal is disliking jokes about death, funerals. Bodies being referred to as cadavers when you know they were once someone's loved one.

Normal is being impatient with everything, but someone stricken with grief over the loss of their child. Normal is feeling a common bond with friends in England, Australia, Netherlands, Canada and all over the USA, but yet never having met any of them face to face.

Normal is a new friendship with another grieving mother and meeting for coffee and talking and crying together over our children and our new lives and worrying together over our living children.

Normal is being too tired to care if you paid the bills, cleaned house or did laundry or if there is any food in the house.

Normal is wondering this time whether you are going to say you have 3 or 4 children because you will never see this person again and it is not worth explaining that one of

Them is in heaven and yet when you say only 3 to avoid that problem you feel horrible as if you have betrayed that child.

And last of all normal is hiding all the things that have become normal for you to feel, so that everyone around you will think that you are normal

When a Child Dies... What We Can Teach the World [and ourselves]...about our grief!

- 1. GRIEF HURTS.** There is real pain. It is not psychosomatic!
- 2. GRIEF IS NORMAL.** The pain, anger, depression, numbness, guilt, mental confusion, etc., is all NORMAL. You are not going crazy because you experience these.
- 3. GRIEF ENDURES.** It lasts longer than society (or we ourselves) generally recognizes. It takes years for healing to occur. Be patient with yourself.
- 4. PEOPLE GRIEVE DIFFERENTLY.** Everyone is an individual and does his/her grief work differently. There is no right way to grieve.
- 5. PHYSICAL REACTIONS** a. Loss of appetite or overeating. b. Insomnia - sleeplessness c. Sleeping all the time-depression? d. Sexual difficulties-not wanting/deserving pleasure. e. Loss of energy - takes all you have to get out of bed! f. Difficulty concentrating -can't hold thoughts, organize, plan, forgetful, etc. g. Physical ailments: hypertension, headaches, any illness related to stress.
- 6. GRIEF BRINGS TEARS.** Causes one to cry. Crying is a healthy expression of grief. It releases built-up tensions. Grieving persons should be encouraged to cry freely as they feel the need. The chemical makeup of tears from grief is different from other tears. **MEN SHOULD CRY TOO!** Crying is OK!
- 7. HOLIDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, SPECIAL DAYS ARE STRESSFUL.** Holidays are "family times" and are difficult when a child is absent. Anniversaries include birthdays,

deathdays. Special Days include every Fridays if the child died on a Friday, 1st day of school and your child isn't there to go this year, graduation exercises -- two and three years after the death...all can be stressful.

8. GRIEF CAUSES ONE TO EXAMINE HIS/HER PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE. We now question many religious principles that we've always accepted without question in the past. Simple answers to life questions are no longer acceptable to many during grief. Things just aren't "black and white" anymore. Those in grief seek deeper truths now and these truths must be real to them -experienced-to be accepted. Questioning God and His role in the loss is NORMAL and OK! Being angry at God is OK! You can't be angry at someone you don't believe in! Remember, there is no way that a loving God would cause a child to die and leave the family with such horrible grief. He hurts when we hurt.

9. GRIEF CHANGES YOU! When your child dies, you will never again be the person you were the day before the death! Friendships and relationships change because WE CHANGE. Don't be frightened by the changes taking place INSIDE you. Go with them. You will eventually find your "resting place" as healing takes place.

10. RECOVERY AND HEALING IS POSSIBLE! You will never "get over" the death of a child and there will always be a void in your life, BUT, you won't always hurt like you do initially. To recover, you must go through the grief, experience it. All attempts to avoid it will only postpone it! **IT DOES GET BETTER!**

This Can BE A Constructive If Not A Happy Year

Happy New Year???" "How can it ever be again?" "How will I ever make it through another year of this torment?" When we are hurting and so terribly depressed, it is hard to see any good in our New Year but we must try,. First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable, that we will someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we don't believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true – because it is! Many parents whose children have died in the past will attest to this. Remember, also, no one can suffer indefinitely as you are suffering now.

Second, we must face the new year with the knowledge that this year offers us a CHOICE – whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must re-mind ourselves that, if we choose to be on our way to healing by the following year, we must work to get there and that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief, to cry, to be angry, to talk about our guilts, to do whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Third, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many of us have other children and a spouse for whom we must go on. Most important, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our dead children would want us to go on! No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate and aware of the real values in life. Let us not waste this New Year.

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.

Wendy & Greg Clouse, whose beloved daughter, **Nicole**, Born 10/6; Died 10/16; 20 years
Jerald Renauer, whose beloved daughter, **Morgan**, Born 5/12; Died 3/5; 23 years

SIBS

Fair or Predictable

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life really isn't always fair or predictable, that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough, and that from that day on, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness. Despite the pain, and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts.

Because of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor; to have a successful career and a productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good

friends and special people to help me through the rough times. But most of all I have been given the gift of time—time to heal and time to replace those painful memories of death with the priceless memories of my sister's life.

*Cathy Schanberger
TCF, Baltimore, MD*

Did You Know

Did you know:

You need to rip up sheets to make a kite that flies.

That you cannot build a fort without a tree with Y's.

That matchbox cars run better when they are full of paint.

Or, if you hold your breath too long, you probably will faint.

Did you know:

A baseball bat makes a terrific gun.

And, yes, an egg can really fry when left out in the sun. And cardboard boxes seem to make the most terrific trains.

And you can swim in puddles after gentle summer rains.

Did you know:

That baseball cards clipped upon your bike will make the awful clicking noise that parents never like.

A crab trap can be used to catch the most exquisite birds and pig Latin

serves to provide

a private world of words.

And did you know my brothers?

They died a few years back.

They taught me all

these marvelous things

That sometimes sisters lack.

Kathi Guthrie

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.



A Sibling's Feelings

The pain of a sibling is so real we sometimes hide it deep inside of ourselves. As we watch our parents hurting we see the pain in their eyes. We are also hurting not only for the loss of our brother or sister but also for our own parents. We need to reach out to each other to let each other know we are hurting inside.

Our lives have all changed forever. I know they lost a son but I lost my younger brother I loved, and as siblings we share a special bond that will never have anymore for he no longer lives...my brother, my friend.

I will always miss you and I will never forget you for you will always live in my heart, and I have wonderful memories no one can ever take away from me. In my heart you will stay, love you forever.

Marie Porreca

TCF Rockland County, NY





Remembering our Friend

Dave was the first Compassionate Friend I ever met. The night I counted each footstep from our car to St Timothy's church to keep me from retreating back to the nothingness of my life after our son Brian had died began with a fella I looked up to, figuratively and literally. Dave was a big guy on the outside and a bigger fella inside. Dave was my friend and he recently passed away from an illness he had battled for quite some time.

Charli and Dave Johnston were the leaders of our Livonia Michigan chapter of Compassionate Friends when my wife Janet and I first joined the group. Charli was the chapter leader and facilitator at my first table discussion. Dave was always at the meetings working in the background. On that first night Dave helped me to find a place for my winter coat, a seemingly simple task, but for those of us that experience the passing away of a loved one we quickly learned that daily normal efforts were often too complicated to be completed independent of a kind consideration from a compassionate friend.

We were buddies joined together by cruel circumstance we shared while huddling under that uniquely tragic unfeeling umbrella of death. Our son Brian and Dave's son Scott had both gone from here to there leaving our hearts in desperate lonely ruin. They had died not of the same cause, sepa-

rated by years, but the pain we were experiencing was so sadly similar.

Years later we needed someone to write the chapter newsletter to take over for Dave and Charli after their years of service to TCF. Dave attempted to teach me to learn how to do it. Dave was the computer programmer guy and I was not. Challenging his patience we met for 2-3 hours on 3-4 occasions. I remember Dave at one point calmly mentioning, 'Pat we are in trouble here' which led me to relate an experience where an exasperated math teacher of mine who after attempting to get into my thick head an arithmetic formula of some sort suggested that there was much merit in 'just giving up.' Dave did not give up but was inspired to find someone else which in reality worked much better for TCF Livonia, and us.

My first candle lighting ceremony as chapter leader in our most picturesque American village in Plymouth Michigan, a park that if painted in words could have inspired poet Robert Frost, Dave saved the day. That night the lights in the park proved insufficient to read the precious names of our children, siblings, and grandchildren. Dave had brought a flashlight as I stood on the ledge of a closed for the winter water fountain using his Mr. Microphone. Dave was prepared. Dave was always there to help out TCF and me.

In 2006 our chapter was blessed to host the TCF National Conference in Dearborn, Michigan. Dave, a talented amateur carpenter created all of our wood center pieces for the banquet tables. Our Conference committee lovingly decorated them at his and Charli's house over many hours, many days, with many hands. Under Dave's direction we applied the paint then attached each individual product to clothes lines to dry. I remember Dave smiling often at that extremely unusual addition to his yard decor. He was happy. He was helping.

Dave Johnston never thought of himself as a 'stepfather' and listen-

ing to Dave neither did we. His heart hurt like ours. David may have passed away but his charity and good will towards his Compassionate Friends lives on. We remember and miss him and always will. If there is a silver lining in the cloud of his passing it is that he gets to sit with all of our loved ones and his beloved son Scott. Rest in peace my friend, you have earned it.
*Your Compassionate Friends,
Janet & Pat O'Donnell
December 2016*



2016 Worldwide Candlelighting

We want to thank everyone who helped us with our event this year. Thanks goes to the City of Plymouth for the use of beautiful Kellogg Park; the Sinagra's and Jeff Reynolds from American Speedy Printing for the 800 ornaments; the 40 plus people who showed up to complete the ornaments and drive to the park to decorate the trees (in the snow and ice); Sally & Roger Cassidy for their reading, Nena Herrick for Lighting the Candle, Pat O'Donnell and Gail Lafferty for reading the names; Rhonda Temple for the power point presentation, the list of names, for ordering our Memory trees, and the candle orders; Kathy Rambo for keeping the new ornaments added to the trees; those who helped with new additions to the list and questions that night; for our signer, Rachel Kallis; and all who were helpful in their own special ways.

Most of all we thank all those who made the snowy trip to the park that evening.

And we light our candlesIn memory of our beautiful children, grandchildren and siblings who have died too soon so that their light may always shine.

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

January 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



January Craft

Craft day will be on Sat., Jan. 21 from 10 am to 1 pm at the home of Kathy Rambo, 1476 Penniman, Plymouth, MI 48170. We will be doing adult coloring with many pictures to choose from and gel pens to use. No charge for this craft