

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



May 2021
Volume 33, Number 5

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:

May 6 - Monthly Chapter Meeting - see
info about meeting on this page

May 1-Craft Day News - see page 7

May 18: 6:00 pm TCF Dinner-at
Richard's Family Restaurant, 39305
Plymouth Rd., Livonia 48150. For more
information, call Kathy 734-306-3930
or katjrambo@gmail.com

July 2021- Virtual International TCF
Conference. More details to follow.

May Meeting!

Balloon Release at the Church

We are very excited to announce that we will be having our May Meeting on Thursday, May 6th in the Church!

Our meeting will be 7-9 PM. We will be having our Balloon Release outside to send notes to our children, grandchildren and siblings that have gone too soon with sharing time after. Balloons will be provided.

Please wear masks and bring your own drinks at this time to keep everyone as safe as possible. We know this past year has been very difficult.



Mother's Day Revisited

Many of us in TCF do not look forward to Mother's Day. On this holiday, when the whole nation is celebrating the joys of parenthood, grieving parents often feel a special anguish.

Mother's Day this year looms as a particularly difficult milestone for me, Sunday, May 10, 1998, is not only Mother's Day but also the second anniversary of the death of my ten-year-old son, Jacob. Because this day of private sadness also happens to be a day of public celebration, I decided that I should start thinking early about the occasion. I engaged in a little research about the holiday and learned a story that I think is worth sharing.

Mother's Day was the creation of a woman named Anna Jarvis in the early years of this century. Anna, who never married and never had children of her own, devoted herself to establishing a national Mother's Day as a way of honoring her beloved mother, who died on May 9, 1905. In Anna's view, her mother deserved a memorial because she had lived selflessly and endured considerable suffering - seven of her eleven children had died in early childhood. According to historians, Anna's mother mourned the deaths of her children throughout her life.

Anna insisted that the holiday always

(Continued on pg 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 Members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

fall on a Sunday so that it would retain its spiritual moorings. Because of her efforts, President Woodrow Wilson finally proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

Although Anna couldn't prevent the new holiday from quickly becoming a marketing phenomenon, she did try. Speaking out against "the mire of commercialization" that threatened to engulf Mother's Day, Anna attempted to preserve her creation as a true "holy day," a time for solemn reflection and prayer.

Mother's Day, then, was borne of a daughter's grief and love. More importantly, it was intended as a tribute to a bereaved mother—a brave woman who lost multiple children but who managed to live with an abiding kindness and generosity toward others. I like knowing this background, and my attitude towards Mother's Day has been colored by the knowledge. The holiday now makes me think of the common sorrow that links all bereaved parents. I feel a bond with Anna's mother that stretches over time and space. In a broader sense, the woman for whom the holiday was founded reminds me of people I've met at TCF who have continued to live productive, meaningful lives in the face of unthinkable loss.

Finally, Mother's Day in its origins symbolizes both the joy and the vulnerability inherent in parenthood. Anna's mother knew all too well that from the moment a child is born, hope and the possibility of tragedy go hand in hand. She understood the fragility of life.

Enriched by its own history, Mother's Day is easier for me to tolerate. The coincidence of dates this year Mother's Day and the anniversary of my son's death—is not as jarring as it once seemed. Although the commercial images of the modern Mother's Day still make me wince, I can turn off the television and envision the kind of day that Anna Jarvis had in mind: a time for quiet reflection and the sharing of cherished memories.

*Barbara Atwood
In memory of Jacob*

The Mother's Day Card

You handed it to me
With never a word
Your eyes shone with feelings
That no one else heard.

When I opened the envelope
I wasn't prepared.
Instead of the humor
We so often shared,
There were flowers and rainbows
And butterflies at play
In a beautiful meadow
On a sunshiny day.

Inside was a verse
Like a sentimental song,
As though you knew
That you'd soon be gone.

This card must last me
A very long time.
Is that why you chose
Such a special rhyme?

At the bottom inside
The heart you had done
You wrote, "I love you, Mom,
From Scott, your only Son."
xxox

Kathi Pittman TCF,

Gratitude – the Key to Happiness

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the

last seven years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

- Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we

know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel."

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

*Richard Edler
TCF South Bay/LA, CA In
Memory of my son Mark Edler*

Mother's Day

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's day is coming soon. That will be an undoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's day card which will not arrive. For us, the reading and re-reading of that one last card - "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you" - will have to last a lifetime. How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been there" already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church - "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance".

Always we struggle with the eternal questions - how does life in fairness extract from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and

pain on that day? Where is the fairness and justice in such barter?

The answer comes back again and again - life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a foretaste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience to wrap our arms around the joyous and beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place it on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood's laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in an alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love?

No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness and the love of a child who has departed, someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, the compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world around you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought. But rather, you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and receiving and in the tissue wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.

*Mary Wildman
TCF Moro, IL*

A Mother's Tear

A single tear trickles down my cheek. It tells a tale I cannot speak Of days gone by that have been stilled. It tells of dreams left unfulfilled. Its wetness holds "what might have been."

Not going to the Senior Prom.
No more "I love you, Mom."
No cap and gown on graduation day.
No wedding bells in the month of May.

No more family birthday celebration,
No voting for the leader of our nation.
Gone, the dream of horse and farm,
Never mine, to hold her babes in arm.

You've followed the path of my lonely tear,
It speaks of one that I hold most dear.
Now, you'll hear this mother cry,
"Why God,
Why did my daughter die?"
*Karen Bell
Bereavement Magazine*

To My Dearest Wife

I searched to find a card for you,
One with something special to say.
They were all very trite.
I decided to write
My own, for this Mother's Day.

To wear the name "Mother" is an honor. It requires a heart loving, giving and true.
In all the world, there is no one else
Deserves this more than you.

You carried her for ten and a half months.
We wanted, worried, then wept.
When she was born, she also died.
There is no measure for our pain's depth.

She changed our lives so totally,
We will never be the same.
The truth of this shows in what I deeply know:
You are a mother in more than just name.

I remember when we laid her to rest.
I said, "We've buried a part of us."
But in my mind and heart I feel
A part of her lives within us.

If I could, I'd bring her back,
So you could hear our baby say,
"I love you, mom."
I'm doing fine. Happy Mother's Day."

*A bereaved father
TCF, Salem, OR*

SIBS

When a Sibling Dies

The death of a child is a family crisis no less for the siblings than for the parents. Surviving siblings may feel abandoned because they experience family friends putting the deceased child on a pedestal. They may feel incredibly guilty, remembering every bout of sibling rivalry, every unkind word and every slammed door. They may feel unworthy to be alive, longing for answers to explain why their brother or sister died and they didn't. And they may, therefore, seek conscious or unconscious ways to self-destruct: running away from home, using alcohol and other drugs, taking on characteristics of the dead sibling and thus diminishing their own image.

Following are suggestions children have shared about how parents can help them when a brother or sister has died:

- Let them choose whether or not they want to see their sibling at the funeral home. Let them choose some of the music, write or read a memorial to their brother or sister, go with you or alone to the cemetery visits.
- Share with the siblings all factual information as it becomes known. Being "left out" only enhances a growing sense of not being important to the family.
- When you see children who remind you of your child, point them out

to the siblings and explain the grief spasm it has caused. Mysterious behavior enhances the siblings' fear of being left out.

- Ask the siblings to be with you occasionally as you grieve. If you always grieve in private, the emotional distance between you will widen.
- Talk with siblings both about pleasant memories and unpleasant memories of the dead child. This prevents pedestal placing.
- Don't tell siblings to "be strong" for someone else. That is too great a burden to carry.
- Understand that it may be easier for siblings to talk to friends, or another trusted adult, than to parents. They desperately do not want to add to their parents' devastation so may seek counsel and understanding elsewhere.

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, #930808 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 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



Janice Lord

TCF, Anne Arundel City, MD

Brother Why

As I sit and wonder why
All I think about is brother why
Why did it happen the way it did
Why did my brother do what he did
As I sit and talk with your kids
So many questions of why you did
what you did
So many memories of you as a kid
As I sit and wonder why
How can you leave them all behind
All I think about is brother why
All the pain you left behind
All I ask is brother why

Kathleen Kumler



PLEASE REMEMBER

Siblings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least 16 years old.

Livonia Chapter Page

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.

- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett “In memory of Michael. Happy Birthday Michael. We miss & love you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn”
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann “In memory of Ryan “Ryfro” McCann on his angel day 5/10”
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann “In memory of Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis on his birthday 5/15”
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann “In memory of our sons; Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis considered a son to our family, Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey, Jim “Jimmy” Vick”
- ♥ Susan Steinberg “In memory of Shannon. Shannon, it is 6 years now and how can we still be here without you? Forever the love and beauty in our lives. Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris – Ajax”
- ♥ Elizabeth Golen “ In memory of Andrew. We love and miss you Andrew! Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff & Blair”
- ♥ Elizabeth Golen “In memory of Andrew. We love you Uncle Andrew! Rose & Teddy”
- ♥ Cindy Stevens “In memory of Justin. Wishing our son Justin a heavenly 44th Birthday. Your always in our heart! Mom & Matt Xoxo”
- ♥ A donation was provided from Mary Hartnett’s Company “The Associated Management Company”

Let Us Celebrate Their Births - continued

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.

Ashish and Aparna Garg, whose beloved son, **Verdaant**, Born 7/10; Died 1/18; 20 years

Vikrant Garg, whose beloved brother, **Verdaant**, Born 7/10; Died 1/18; 20 years

Lonnie Currie, whose beloved daughter, **Katherine**, Born 2/21; Died 2/19; 17 years

Patrick Westphal, whose beloved daughter, **Katherine**, Born 2/21; Died 2/19; 17 years



Our **Craft Day** will be on Saturday, May 1, 2021 from 10 am until 1 pm at the home of Kathy Rambo. Please call Kathy 734-306-3930 or Gail 734-748-2514 if you want to attend. We will be making glass charms with our child, grandchild or sibling’s. We will need to receive the photo you want to use for the charms by April 26. Please send to Gail (angel4gail2016@gmail.com) or to her cell phone. The pic will be reduced to the correct size. Limit of 3 charms. Cost: \$6.00 each. Please bring a mask. There will be examples of the charms on The Compassionate Friends of Livonia Michigan Facebook page. Please check them out there. If you are not a member already, please ask to join the facebook 7 page and the administrator will admit you. Any questions? Please call Gail or Kathy.

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

May 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

His Room

Sun splinters through
The stained-glass unicorn still on
the sill
Splattering black walls with color
Few things are as forlorn as a
vacant room
Furniture gone, awaiting definition
Bare, yet there on the carpet
Imprints of chair and waterbed
And there is the hole he
Accidentally shot through the wall
And there and there and there
Nail holes that held pictures and
posters
And eight-point antlers
And there... God, how can a place
So empty, be so full?
*Richard Dew From Rachel's Cry—A
Journey Through Grief
TCF, Oklahoma City, OK*