

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



May 2017
Volume 29, Number 5

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 - May 4 - Annual
Balloon Lift** at 7:00 pm. Family and
friends are welcome to attend. If you
would like, bring a small treat to share.
Shortened sharing session

May 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@wowway.com.

May 27 - Craft Day - see pg. 7

**July 28-19: TCF Conference -
Orlando, FLA**

August 13 - First Annual TCF Picnic

Parental Love

Something to think about as Mother's Day and Father's Day approach, Parental Love involves a never ending commitment and plenty of opportunities to care for and assume responsibility for your child. Parental grief challenges you to find a way to live with the frustration of being robbed of the opportunity to directly care and be responsible for your child.

Parental Love involves having plenty of opportunities for emotional and physical contact with your child. Parental grief challenges you to find a way to continue loving your child without the continued contact.

Parental Love involves having dreams and expectations for the future of your child. Parental grief challenges you to find solace and meaning in a life briefly lived.

Parental Love involves attending to your child's needs when he is in your presence. Parental grief challenges you to learn how to look after your own needs when you sense your child's presence or struggle with his absence.

Parental Love involves learning to live with your child's natural or gradual absence as they grow up and leave home. Parental grief challenges you to find way to deal with your child's unnatural and sudden absence.

Parental Love involves an expanded

capacity for love and life. Parental grief challenges you to find a way to use for that expanded capacity, to not let it go to waste or to wither away.

Because parental love is never ending, so too is parental grief; you don't really get over the death of a child, you just learn to live with it. And, so on this special day when you celebrate your role as a mother or father, be kind to yourself. Give yourself a hug. Give yourself some time alone. Give yourself permission to remember, to cry, to miss your child, to tell others how you feel. But, most important of all, remember to celebrate the special gift of parental love, the last gift that your child has given you, a gift that not even death can take away.

*Karen Martin,
TCF, Rockville Center, NY*

Welcome Newcomer

Beneath the laughter and the smiles
Echoes the anguish of children gone.
Don't be misled by the superficial joy.
Our normal appearance belies our eternal grief.

We rush to meetings to share details of death.

In better days we would have changed the channel to avoid the horror.
Priorities change.

(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

Newcomers enter, confused and angry,
They wonder whether these laughing
parents have truly lost their minds.
They do NOT yet realize we do this
so as NOT to lose our minds.

Balloons of all colors decorate the
room.
“Are we at a birthday party?”
Many are busy writing messages with
their hearts.
Soon the balloons will rise to the
heavens symbolically touching our
precious loves.

We know well this anger and confu-
sion.
We remember believing we would
never laugh again.
Now, with newfound wisdom, we
know
it is possible and necessary to be able
to laugh and cry through tears of grief.
Someday you will know this, too.

*By Moe Bere, TCF Babylon Chapter, NY
Reprinted from Flint, MI Newsletter, Vol.
25, No. 1*

Let's Go Home

Let's go home -
My eyes pleaded to my husband.
We don't belong here.
This is crazy – these people
Are still hurting. Two, five years
Later and they are still coming here.

Let's go home.
We don't belong here.
We won't, we can't be like that.
Perhaps –
If I don't speak,
If I don't tell them why we came –
It won't be true.

But wait...Why are they laughing?
How can they be laughing?
They all lost children, yet they are
laughing at Something, somehow,

And wait...Why am I nodding at what
he's saying? Why do I feel I must say
something
To that couple who is in this nightmare
Even less time than we?

They all seem to know
What I'm feeling – without my even
saying it – Just not flinching at my
tears.
That steady, endless stream of tears
that
Seems will never stop.
Perhaps –
One day I'll join their laughter?
Let's wait –
Perhaps we shouldn't leave just yet.
*Sandy Fein
Manhasset, NY*

Chasing after Closure

I keep reading in the newspapers about
survivors of tragedy or death seeking
“closure.” Yet no one really defines
what closure means, whether it is pos-
sible or how to get there. For many in
our society, closure means leaving grief
behind, a milestone usually expected
within a matter of weeks or months.
Closure means being “normal,” getting
back to your old self, no longer crying
or being affected by the death. It means
“moving on with life” and leaving the
past behind, even to the extent of for-
getting it or ignoring it.

For those of us who have experienced
death, this kind of closure is not only
impossible but indeed undesirable.
Closure, if one even chooses to use the
term, is actually more a process than
a defined moment. The initial part of
closure is accepting reality. At first we
keep hoping or wishing that it weren't
true. We expect our loved ones to walk
through the door. We wait for someone
to tell us it was all a huge mistake. We
just can't accept that this person has
died, that we will never physically see
them again on earth, that we will not
hear their voices, feel their hugs, or get
their input on a tough decision.

Usually it takes weeks or even months
for the reality to finally sink in. We
come to know, in our heads and even-
tually in our hearts that our loved one
has died and is not coming back. We
still don't like it, but we accept it as
true. As the reality sinks in, we can
more actively heal. We begin making
decisions, and start to envision a life
different from what we had planned

before, a life in which we no longer
expect our loved one to be there. We
grow, struggle, cry and change. We
form fresh goals. We face our loneli-
ness. We feel the pain and loss, but
except for short periods of time, are
not crippled by it.

We also make a shift in memory.
Memories of our loved ones, rather
than always being painful as they were
at first, sometimes make us smile or
even laugh. This healing phase takes
a very long time, and involves a lot of
“back-and-forth.” We alternate be-
tween tears and joy, fears and confi-
dence, despair and hope. We take two
steps forward and one step back. We
wonder whether we'll ever be truly
happy again, and often doubt that we
will.

Eventually we realize we are taking
the past, with all its pain and pleasure,
into a new tomorrow. We never forget,
and in fact we carry our beloved with
us; he or she is forever a cherished
part of who we are.

We are changed, by the experience
of having loved this person, by the
knowledge of life's transience, and by
grief itself. We become different and
hopefully better, more compassion-
ate, more appreciative, more tolerant
people. We fully embrace life again,
connecting, laughing and loving with
a full heart. Still, there is no point
of “final closure,” no point at which
we can say, “Ah, now I have finally
completed my grief.” Or, “Yes, now
I have healed.” There is no point at
which we will never cry again, al-
though as time goes on the tears are
bittersweet and less common. Healing
is a lifelong process, one in which we
often don't even realize we are healing
until we look back and see how far we
have come. “Closure?” I don't think
so. Acceptance, yes; peace, yes; hope,
definitely, but putting a period behind
the final sentence and closing the book
on it? No! Life and love are much too
complex for that. The story does not
end; instead it awaits the next chapter.

*Amy Florian
Hoffman Estates, IL*

A Gift of Gratitude at Graduation

May 28, 2011, the high school graduation of our son's classmates, the same kids who all started together in a new school building 13 years ago now graduate as one class. It didn't seem like such a big deal until I got there. I work there I go there everyday, but this time, the school parking lot is full to its' capacity. Right at that moment my heart skipped a beat,

"Maybe I shouldn't be here? This somehow seems wrong. But I HAVE to be here, this is the moment that we dreamed of since the first day of school. Will everyone understand?"

I had spent the past 13 years watching this group of kids grow up, the last two and a half of them helping them cope with the loss of their classmate and friend. More so, helping myself by leaning on them and envisioning what my son's high schools days should have been had he been here. I spent those days laughing and smiling seeing them grow-up into a group of amazing young people who lost two classmates in a short time. Ever since the loss of our son, those kids were our soul to what "could have been." I went to the football games, the basketball games the wrestling matches, concerts, all of it, just be sure I didn't miss a thing I knew Brady would have wanted to be a part of. This became a part of my daily life, a part of me, something I was doing to keep his memory alive. I was a fixture at all the events, so why, at the biggest event of their high school days do I feel like I shouldn't be there?

I walk into the building, knowing all too well, the tears are soon to start. I tell myself, "I won't, this is a happy day." I see in front of me; moms, dads, family, friends, curious onlookers, all there to see who was going to walk across the stage. For a minute I stood there, truly contemplating whether to stay or turn and run. I slowly walk forward to see a beautiful table adorned with my son and their other class-mates' diploma, photo and

graduation announcement proudly displayed for all to see. I cautiously walk up to the table to view the reward that his class bestowed to him and their other lost classmate. The tears begin, but not all of sadness, much of it pride, that they thought so much of Brady to remember him.

I walk into the gym all adorned in graduation attire, and what do I see? Two huge bouquets of red roses, prominently placed in the first 2 chairs where the graduates sit, one for Brady, the other for Cody. These kids never cease to amaze me. As pomp & circumstance begins to play, I watch the graduates file in, one by one, friend by friend, memory by memory, somehow hoping, praying that maybe, just maybe it is all a dream and Brady will also be walking down side by side with his best friend. But reality hits and as they file by my heart is heavy for he is not there and this is another ending. Graduation is one more thing my son has missed.

As the ceremony moves on I watch them, all of them, some looking excited, others somber, some... almost lost as to where they are going on their next part of the journey. The event goes on, and memories are shared and stories of their lost classmates somehow put my heart at ease, "He is remembered, he will always be remembered." The final stages begin as the class presents the memory video of each student as a mere infant to a glorious high school graduate, a section of the pictures dedicated solely to the memory of their two lost classmates, a tribute to their place with "their" class. An ironic sense of calmness swept over me as I realized, my son lives. Though not physically, his spirit lives on in the hearts of his friends, his family and all those lives he touched during his short time here.

The group regains composure and the handing of diplomas begin, what a sight as each and everyone walks proudly across the stage to receive their, to this date, greatest achievement. My son's name is called, his best friend takes the diploma and with

love and adoration for his buddy of 15 years glows as he raises it high above his head and his classmates applaud and cheer. Not only pride in my son emanates through me, but pride for this amazing group of children. At that moment I truly came to believe that the love a child is absolutely unconditional no matter what their age may be.

The happy graduates turn to the crowd, move their tassels from the right to the left and are proudly announced, "The graduating class of 2011".... I look at them... all of them. My heart bursting with pride, I can't help but smile and think right now, at this very moment, there is no place else I would rather be. I was meant to be here celebrating with them. These kids are what have kept me going these past two and half years, they became what I have lived for.... I DO belong here. Without this group of kids I truly do not know if I would have had the will power to go on after losing Brady. They gave me hope, dreams, and a reason to just "be." There are no words of thanks or gift of gratitude that I could ever give them that would ever be enough for them to know how much they mean to me.

Yes.... I was meant to be at that graduation, maybe another chapter closed on my life's journey, but what a gift these kids have given me. I watched them grow in happiness and sorrow, in high points and the lowest of lows, this was an amazing chapter... now I get to see them live out their lives in the next chapters to follow, all them with Brady safely tucked away in their hearts.

Kelly Kowaleski,

Michigan Basket

As in the past, we would like to have a Michigan basket to be a part of the silent auction at the National Conference. Donations should represent our state. Gail asked that it not include bottles of wine or large breakable items, as the basket has to be transported on a plane.

If you have questions or want to make a donation, please see Gail or Kathy.

SIBS

Dealing with Grief: A Sibling Viewpoint

Two things happened to me on January 11, 1992. I lost my brother to death, and I lost my parents to grief. My dad, the one who seemed to always have the answer to my questions, the “rock” in the family, the one whose job was to fix everything, completely lost it. The fear, anger, and shock in his eyes when told that my brother had died are engraved into my memory. He fell limp in the arms of my mother and me in the emergency room at UCLA medical center. This was the first time I had ever seen my parents lose control. At that moment our roles switched.

“I’ll take them,” I said to the

nurse as she handed me a bag labeled “EDLER.” It was the personal belongings of my brother. I quietly took them and placed them in my car. For the next three months, I seemed to make many of the decisions. It was not a courageous leader rising up to the occasion. I was the least common denominator. My parents, although they tried, could not help me. They were trying to deal with the tremendous grief themselves.

For this reason, I put off dealing with Mark’s death for many months. I cried and felt sad, but never addressed the issue. My friends were concerned and asked how I was doing. But no one, unless you have been there, really wants to hear the true answers. Mark was the only other person in the world who was a combination of my mom and dad. My friends could not relate nor would I want them to. I would never wish this

upon anyone. But this left me alone to deal with it and I chose to put it off.

After three months I met a gentleman at a family retreat with a group of which my dad was a part. Kevin had lost his brother to suicide about nine months earlier. He was farther along in his “coping” than I was. I could talk to him about Mark, mention Mark’s name and share stories without making the whole room uncomfortable about the subject.

I saw someone who was dealing with it and it gave me hope. There is a certain vocabulary that you learn after going through this that no book, no story, and no amount of explanation can do justice. I don’t talk about certain things with my friends because I do not have the time or energy to explain (or try to explain) the many feelings I am having. Kevin understood. He had the vocabulary.

This was the first step into healing. I came to grips with the reality of my new life—different than the one before, but there was no going back. At this point, I went on autopilot. I remember many events of the three years following the death. My girlfriend and I broke up. My parents changed houses. I went through the many firsts, but just kept moving forward. I was not depressed, however. My lows were not very low. But my highs were not very high.

I became involved with The Compassionate Friends sibling group of our local chapter in the third year. I did it half out of responsibility to my parents and half out of the knowledge that if I was running the meeting, then I was in control of how much sharing I needed to put into it. Kind of a control thing. To my surprise the meetings have become so beneficial to my healing that I am surprised at myself. By sharing with others, I feel that I help them and in turn myself. Many feelings, thoughts, or emotions that I may have thought

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.



were just mine, I have found are universal with others. After three years I began to come "out of the valley." I can only say that by looking back. Hindsight has allowed me to see my steps of healing. I stepped into the role of being strong for our family because I felt that was best. Many others I have talked to mention a similar reaction. Your parents are barely able to deal with their own grief. The last thing you want to do is bring more pain on them, so, you don't share with them. Last July at The Compassionate Friends conference, many parents walked up to me and asked, "How do I know if my son (daughter) is dealing with this? I am concerned since they do not tell me anything." "You don't know," I answered, "and neither do I, but unless you see something obviously dangerous, they are dealing with it in their own way at their own speed and you may not be a part of their grieving."

I now have a different outlook on life. It is precious. I feel that in my new life I am closer to my parents. Each one of us has to live our lives 1/3 better in Mark's memory. I value my

friends and time more. I can handle stress much better. Just think of the alternative. I have become a better person by helping others. I like the new person I have become.

I would trade it all in a second!
Rick Edler, TCF, LA/South Bay, CA

The Battle Within

The war we fight is as horrendous to us as any war ever fought anywhere, anytime. Many people around us, however, are unaware that we continue to fight this war. The best allies we have are those who are fighting the same war and understand our continuing struggle. The wounds we suffer; especially in our worst early battles, are very deep and slow to heal; indeed, the wounds never completely heal. The pain initially is so bad that we sometimes are nearly ready to give up the fight, as our will is nearly exhausted. As days, weeks, months and years pass, we slowly win more major battles, but the small skirmishes still come, often unpredictably. Just as our wounds never completely heal, the battles seem to never end. In time, we come to understand that these

battles will be part of our lives forever, although the frequency and intensity will gradually become less. We also find that our pain is lessened when we help those new combatants who are suddenly forced into this conflict. We hope that no one else is drawn: into this war, but we know that inevitably, others will suddenly and unwillingly be forced into the battles. The war we fight is a silent war; within our own psyches. Such is the war of grief we fight as parents who have suffered the death of a child.

Dave & Marsha Wildin, TCF, Algona, IA

May CRAFT

Our craft day will be on May 27, 2017 from 10 am to 1 pm at the Plymouth District Library. We will be making shadow boxes and there will be an example at the May meeting. This will be a special box with little cubbies to hold special items from your child and there will be a place for a photo. Cost: \$6.00. There will be a sign up sheet at the meeting as we will want to know how many shadow boxes to purchase. Any questions, please call Gail or Kathy or see them at the May meeting.

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.

- ♥ Aileen Cummings & Tim Wloch "In memory of Lola Wloch. We miss you & daddy so much! I hope he holds you all the time"
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "In memory of our sons "Ryan 'Ryfro', Tom Jr. & Bryan 'Bryfro' Soupis considered a son to our family & Mark 'Sparky' Abbott"
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "Ryan 'Ryfro' on his angel day 5/10"
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "Bryan 'Bryfro' on his birthday 5/15"
- ♥ Dale & Susan Moser "In memory of Gregory. Gregory we miss you & love you! Mom, Dad, Ryan, Michael & Philip"
- ♥ Elizabeth Golen "In memory of Andrew. Happy 30th Birthday my dear Andrew! Love you forever, Mom"
- ♥ Laura Meyers "In memory of Paul. We'll love and miss you always!"
- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett "In memory of Michael. Happy Birthday Bud! We love you and miss you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn"
- ♥ Manda Puttock & family "In memory of Amber. Missing Amber's hugs!!"
- ♥ Brendolyn Jasper "Jeffrey mommy misses you"

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.

Lynette and Mike Bivins, whose beloved son, **Bryan**, Born 4/1; Died 12/20; 26 years

Elma Ortega, whose beloved son, **Matthew**, Born 5/11; Died 4/9; 24 years

John & Michele Schroeder, whose beloved daughter, **Megan**, Born 6/23; Died 11/22; 19 years

Janet & James Tomassi, whose beloved son, **Jacob**, Born 3/10; Died 3/22; 30 years

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

May 2017

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,
please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel

Rays of Sunshine
Oceans of Hope
Orlando, FLA/ July 28-30
www.compassionatefriends.org

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

First Annual Family and
Friends Picnic of Hope

August 13th: 12 - 5 pm
Rotary Park in Livonia (off 6 Mile
between Merriman and Farmington)

\$5 per family
Bring a dish to pass
Meat is being donated
Alcohol not permitted

If you have questions or would
like to help, please contact Rhonda
Temple at 313-477-9889.