

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2020
Volume 32, Number 10

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:

October 1st - see info about meeting
on this page.

No Craft Day

October 20th - 6:30 pm - Chapter
Dinner: TCF Dinner-at Richard's
Family Restaurant, 39305 Plymouth
Rd., Livonia 48150.
Call Kathy 734-306-3930 or
katjrambo@gmail.com
See info about Annual Candle Lighting
on page 5

A Note from our Chapter Leadership

Our next meeting will be on October 1st!

We are meeting at Rotary Park, 32184 Six Mile Rd., Livonia, MI, if weather permits. We will be starting our meeting at 6:30 pm as the facilities at the park close at 8:30 pm. Look for our blue "The Compassionate Friends" tablecloth when you arrive as we can't always meet at the same pavilion. Please bring a mask, lawn chair and your own drink.

If we cannot meet in the park due to the weather, we will have a virtual meeting via Zoom* starting at 7 pm. Updates will be posted on our The Compassionate Friends of Livonia Michigan Facebook page. Please join the Facebook page if you have not already done so.

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

Please take good care of yourselves ... we want you all to be safe.

Trick or Treat, Now and Then

For me, Halloween marks the beginning of the holiday season. This used to mark the start of an emotional decline that ran straight through Valentine's Day. October has Halloween, November has Thanksgiving Day, December has my birthday, my Cathie's birthday, and Christmas. January has New Year's Day (the day the accident happened) and January 13 (the day she died). So when Halloween came, I would just as soon have gone to sleep and not wake up until sometime in February.

As the children came to the door and called out, "Trick or Treat!" I would cringe because I would think of how I would never hear Cathie say those words again. That was THEN...Now, fifteen years later, I am able to hear those words. And as I hand out their "goodies," I inwardly thank them for letting me remember when Cathie did go trick or treating and had so much fun. I have those oh-so-very-good memories. They are good memories NOW... And it's all of those good memories that keep me going, even after all of these years.

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*

Reading Is a Haven... Not a Place to Hide

Some people like to read. Some people live to read. Since I was a child I have read about four books a week. So it was only natural that I develop a new reading style when my son died in December of 2002. For a week I read Todd's obituary over and over again. I had written it. Was it suitable? I second guessed myself about that for some time.

The week after Todd's death I began reading short poems, articles and short stories. I would find myself stopping and starting, re-reading a line over and over again until it finally penetrated my brain.

After a month I began reading books again. It was difficult, but I found books which were suitable to my current state of mind. Books about peace, serenity, self-help, death, the after-life. Soon I found a web site devoted to grief resources. I ordered several books and devoured them.

Reading helped to fill the giant hole in my spirit; it helped me to realize that others had walked this road and had actually survived. I was certain for the first three months after Todd's death that I wouldn't survive; in fact, I didn't want to survive.

Finally I decided to read the types of books I had always read...history, biography, mysteries, current events analysis, funny books, sad books, books with a message. I lived in my books; for a brief period I didn't exist....the only reality was the book I was reading.

Not everyone reads. Some parents spend great amounts of time in thoughtful reflection, in prayer, in meditation. Others watch television and movies. Many retreat within themselves, too emotionally pummeled to talk. Others lose themselves in their work. All balance is removed from each life, no matter what we choose.

And that's what had happened to me. I had removed the balance from my life by escaping into books. After almost three months of reading,

withdrawing into other worlds and living in books, I went to a meeting of the Compassionate Friends. I realized I was not balanced, grounded or centered. I realized, too, that escaping into alternative realities was not the answer.

That first meeting was frightful. My life consisted of work and home and nothing else. I imagined all kinds of terrible scenarios. But yet, I went. I met caring parents who seemed to have their lives in order. The second meeting was better; by the third meeting I was talking....in short sentences.

Gradually over more than two years, I became a participant in the meeting and in the process. I volunteered to help.....just a little at first, then more as time went on. I went to seminars. I sorted through the pain, the agony, the horror I was feeling. I began to achieve a balance.

My husband and I began spending weekends in the country with my family. This was a positive change for me. A friend would stop at my office and bring lunch every week. I invited a few people to our home. I couldn't see it then, but I was on the road to becoming "rebalanced". My reality is different now: my only child is dead. Much of who I am is wrapped in being Todd's mom. But my "rebalanced self" has a changing perspective. I have become more grounded through the Compassionate Friends. Sharing my feelings and listening to others has helped me to become centered and balanced. Reading is still my passion, but it is not my life.

Each of us finds an escape from the world after the death of our child..... something to revise our history and help us survive. But eventually we must seek balance, find ways of coping with our soul-shattering loss and ground ourselves in our new reality. The Compassionate Friends has done all of that for me. But I had to take the first step.

Annette Mennen Baldwin In memory of my son, Todd Mennen TCF, Katy, TX

Valley of the Butterflies

There is a sun-drenched valley, light with the scent of clover and lilacs - where the butterflies dance. Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors of every hue and dimension. There are monarchs and skippers, swallowtails and delicate spring azures. Each dances its unique pattern of flits, circles and dives.

There are no roads, paths, or gates to broach the valley's entrance; Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams. Every parent who has sent forth a child, and vainly waited for its return, comes seeking in the valley of the butterflies and there finds a beautiful spirit, stretching its wings to the clouds and brushing its feet on the grass, dancing in swoops, flits and dives, drying its dewy wings in the warm sunshine of forever.

*Marcia Alig,
TCF, Princeton NJ*

Writing Your Child's Story

The possibility of forgetting even the smallest detail of our child's life is a fear most of us have. In truth, over the months and years, many of these details do dim. Writing them down is a way to keep from losing these memories. This way, we will not only have a permanent remembrance of our child for ourselves, but this will also be a legacy for other family members. Here are some suggestions.

--Write in a spiral notebook. This way nothing you write will be lost.

--Begin at the beginning. Write all the details of your child's life from his birth to his death day.

--Use your child's pictures to help remind you of occasions and happenings over the years. Ask friends and relatives to tell you anything they remember about your child. (This may make them a little uncomfortable at first, but let them know how important it is to you.) Also, write any thoughts and feelings you remember having at the time.

--Record the bad things your child did and said in his life as well as the good things. It is important to write both the

child's good and bad sides so we can remember him as the real person he was.

--Write about your child's death. Record as many details surrounding it as you care to retell. Write about the days before his burial, the funeral, the day after, two weeks, a month, and so on. Record how others helped.

--Write a letter to your child. Include: What I wish I had said to you. What I wish I had not said to you. What I wish I had done. What I wish I had not done. What I wish you had done. What I wish you had not done. What I wish I could ask you. What I would like to tell you. Pour out your feelings to your child. Tell him of your anger, your guilt. Tell your child how you love him. Tell your child goodbye.

Don't worry about whether you write well. Don't worry about form or grammar. Just write. If you want to submit part of your writing for publication, you can always edit it later or ask a friend to help you polish it.

Keep your notebook handy. Write anytime you feel you want to say something to him, or when you remember some detail that suddenly comes to mind. When you have trouble sleeping, write down the things that keep coming into your mind.

Writing about your child or to your child will be emotional. It will probably make you cry. Don't let this stop you. Crying can be extremely helpful in releasing your tensions and will help you with your grief work.

*Margaret Gerner
TCF, St. Louis, MO*

UPDATE ON 24th WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING FOR OUR CHAPTER 2020

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting held on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 13th, 2020 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Since the corona virus is still an issue, we will not be allowed to hold our Candle Lighting at Kellogg Park in Plymouth, Michigan this year. We will be sharing ideas on how you can plan your own Candle Lighting at home in next month's newsletter.

"The Walk of Trees" will still be held by the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce in the park and our chapter will be a part of this as in prior years. We have decided to do the ornaments for the Memory Trees a little different this year. We will be asking any family who would like to have an ornament on the tree to make their own and place it on one of the trees. We will offer a template in our newsletter (page 7) and you can be creative with this template or design your own. There will be a size stipulation (no larger than 5"x 5") for the ornament and we can give some ideas. You may also purchase an ornament of your choosing, but remember the trees are in an open park and there is a possibility of it being removed. The trees will not be ready for ornaments until the week before Thanksgiving. We will post the date on our TCF Facebook page. Please be respectful of other families who will be participating in this new way of remembering our loved ones on our Memory Trees.

If you have any questions, please call one of the following: TCF # 734-778-0800, Joyce 734-560-6883, Mary 313-550-5410 or Cindy 734-837-3722.

You Know You're Making Progress When...

You can remember your child with a smile.
You realize the painful comments others make are made in ignorance.
You can reach out to help someone else.
You stop dreading holidays.
You can concentrate on something besides your child.
You can be alone in your house without it bothering you.
You can talk about what happened to

your child without falling apart.
You can tolerate the sound of a baby crying.
You don't have to turn off the radio when his or her favorite music comes on.
You can find something to laugh about.
You can drive past the hospital or that intersection without screaming.
You no longer feel exhausted all the time.
You can appreciate a sunset, the smell of newly mown grass, and the pattern

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.

- ♥ Rick & Mary Bodnar "Mike, I cannot believe you have been gone 30 years. We miss you as much if not more than when you left. Love, Mom, Rick & Curtis"
- ♥ Cindy Stevens "In memory of Justin. Missing you so very much each and everyday. Always in our heart."
- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett "In memory of Michael. Michael, not a day goes by that we don't miss you bud! Love you, Mom & Dad"
- ♥ Joyce & Rob Gradinscak " In memory of Adam. Adam --- Missing you every day! Love you babe, Mom, Dad, Jamie & Dave"
- ♥ Dan & MaryBeth Myska "In memory of Andrew (Drew)! Drew in our thoughts, prayers & tears on your birthday; 9-19! 10 hard years. Love Mom, Dad, Matt, Molly & especially Bryanna."
- ♥ Dick & Kathy Shellenbarger "In memory of Anna Doree"

SIBS

I Am Your Sister and Always Will Be

"I am your sister and always will be." That's how Susie signed her cards to me. After a while, she shortened it to, "I am..." And of course I knew the rest of it. Susie was two and one-half years younger than I. She was alive one evening talking on the phone to Mom about the Oscars and to Dad about moving. The next day she was found. Whatever it was--it ended her life and changed mine forever.

There was a wonderful side of my sister that I didn't pay enough attention to. She was a kind and loving person, always ready to shelter lost animals and lost souls. When she was in a

good mood, her smiles warmed my heart. Yet I spent most of my life wishing that things were different: wishing that she thought more of herself, wishing that she would take my advice, wishing that she were happier, wishing that we could accept each other.

Now, for two years, I've done nothing but wish she were here so we could have another chance to work at our relationship. Now, I wish that I had been able to give her my unconditional love & support. (She needed it and deserved it.) Now, I wish that I could have been with her that night so she would not have been alone. Now, I wish that I would have held her in my arms and told her how very much I loved her. Because, Susie, I am your sister and always will be.

Michele Walters

TCF Baltimore, MD I

Come Little Boy

Come little boy, and sit in my lap,
And I'll tell you about another
While I rock you to sleep,
Singing the lullabies he loved.

Come little boy, hold my hand
And I'll teach you to walk
While I tell you
How proud another would be.

Come little boy, sit by my side
And share your wonderful
Adventures with me
While I share some of his with you.

Come little boy, and play with me,
And I'll tell you the names
Of your dinosaurs
Taught to me by another.

Come little boy, on a hot summer's
day,
And I'll teach you to fish.
Will you like it like the other?

Come little boy, whisper your
dreams,
And I'll marvel at them.
Later, when the house is dark,
I'll whisper them all to him.

Come little boy, and learn about
him. I have so much to share.
Promises I made to him
To teach you these things.

Know little boy, he wanted so much
to be here
To show you the world
And watch you grow.
But Heaven, for him, would not
wait.

So come little boy,
And I'll tell you why I love you like
no other.
Someone taught me to the fullest ...
Your brother.

PLEASE REMEMBER

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

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: PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; Phone: (630) 990-0010; Toll Free: (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

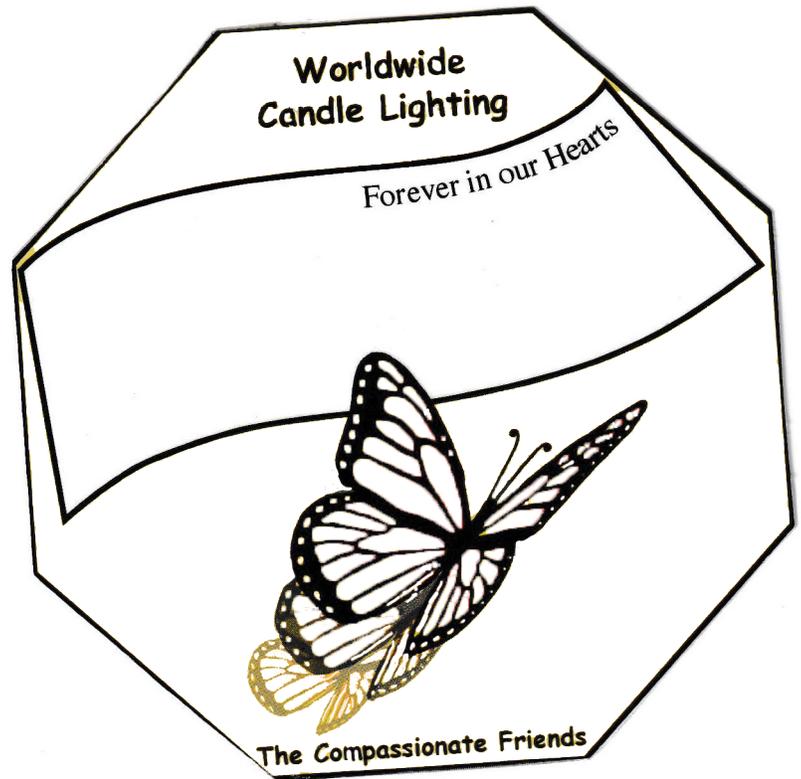


Livonia Chapter Page

Directions for making your own ornament:

You can use the ornament template provided as is, cut it out and decorate with your child's name, a picture, stickers and/or the year 2020. Please do not use any birth or death dates. You can also cut it out, trace it onto different paper like scrapbook paper or cardstock, and then decorate as you like.

The next step is to laminate or use clear contact paper so that the ornament can be sealed and sustain our Michigan weather. Laminate and/or contact paper can be purchased at local stores and the office stores will laminate for you. You need to leave approximately 1/2" edge around the ornament so water cannot reach the ornament. Make a small hole at top on the laminate and put wire or string in the hole and attach it to the Memory tree.



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.

Geneva James, whose beloved son, **Michael** Born 1/25; Died 6/10; 52 years

Dee Banicki, whose beloved son, **Sam**, Born 6/22; Died 1/20; 30 years

Sheryl Bell, whose beloved son, Derek; Born 1/25; Died 5/15; 48 years

Please excuse an error that was made last month on date errors for a new member. It should have read:

Julie, Eric & Kennedy Carrier, whose beloved son and brother, **Cody**, Born 4/18; Died 7/16; 25 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

I cleaned out the garage after he died and I found our beach ball...

I couldn't let the air out of it. It's his breath in there.

Carol Burnett in the film Laundromat

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

September 2020

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

Traveling Together

You found the strength to come
You will discover a hidden strength
to continue on
While here we can travel together
You will find courage to connect
You can find a place to belong
For as long as you need a
companion
We will be here for you
We are The Compassionate Friends
And when you find your new pace,
renewed strength, and a little more
courage
You can be that hope for someone
else, that rest area for another weary
traveler
And you become a Compassionate
Friend.

Pamela Hagens
TCF Nashville