

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2021
Volume 33, Number 10

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:

October 7 - Monthly Chapter Meeting
- see info about meeting on page 7.
Please see special note from the chapter
leadership

October 19 : 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

October 30 - Craft Day
See page 7.

Save the Date! November 4

We welcome back Alan Pedersen,
Angels Across America Tour,
to our chapter meeting.

Alan's performance is open to anyone who has experienced the death of a child, grandchild and sibling. Alan Pedersen is an award-winning speaker, songwriter and recording artist. His inspirational message of hope and his music have resonated deeply with those facing a loss or adversity in their lives and have made him one of the most popular, in demand presenters in the world on finding hope after loss. Since the death of his 18-year-old daughter Ashley in 2001, Alan has traveled to more than 1,500 cities speaking and playing his original music.

Alan also successfully served four years as the Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends, the largest grief organization in the world.

The Angel Van will not be coming with Alan this year since Covid is still an issue and The Angels Across the USA Tour is on hold for now. His last visit here was during 2019 where he performed in over 100 U.S. cities. The Tour works with organizations large and small who are reaching out to those in grief and offers to present Alan's program regardless of their ability to pay a fee or all of the expenses of travel.

During this meeting we will not have sharing time.

Musings on Halloween

As I type this, the nip in the October air is a reminder that the major holidays are just around the corner. Halloween paraphernalia has been in the stores since July with Christmas decorations right behind them. For those of us who are bereaved parents, this means the



sooner the décor is on the store shelves, the longer we have the constant reminders that we will be facing the holidays without our child present. Whether this is your first Halloween following their death or years down the road, such as in my situation, the holiday season stirs

(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

Birthdays and Anniversaries have been removed from the Internet version of our newsletter for security purposes.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

the emotions. For example, with Halloween, there could be the sorrow of no longer having to find that perfect costume or witnessing the delight in your child's eyes as they head out the door to trick-or-treat. If your child was an adult when they died, perhaps it is your old memories of Halloweens when they were youngsters. And there are those whose children died before they ever had the opportunity to create memories, the sadness that they were never able to experience even one holiday with that child.

Halloween can be particularly hard to get through. In the past, I always thought of it as innocuous enough; costume parties, children excitedly dashing door-to-door looking for treats, pumpkin carving, and the occasional harmless prank. However, after my daughter Nina died, I became acutely aware of things that I had never given a second thought. For instance, my neighbor made their whole front yard into a graveyard scene of fake headstones with scary or silly epitaphs on them, and terrifying creatures coming out of the earth. Before Nina died, I also found cemeteries "creepy", but now look at them differently, even with a sort of reverence. I no longer have a problem going out to my daughter's grave-site, even in the middle of the night. I find the solitude of the historic countryside graveyard where she lays peaceful, dignified and worthy of respect. I was hurt by what I felt was ridicule and disdain for the final resting place of our loved ones' physical bodies. In addition, some of the masks portrayed faces of death in a way that I found highly offensive, especially since I knew many who lost their children to some of the means depicted. I perceived it as a mockery of the tragedies that these families suffered.

Though I still don't pretend to understand the allure of the above-mentioned Halloween depictions, they aren't as painful to me as they were the first few years after Nina died. Especially in the early grief years, we become hypersensitive to our sur-

roundings and more keenly aware of anything related to death. It is pretty hard to look past the non-bereaved populations seeming nonchalance about something we take so personally. Though we wish there was more understanding, we also know all too well that they cannot truly empathize unless they have walked in our shoes. It is easy to forget that, before our children's deaths, we too may have shown the same indifference. We'd like to think that we would not have been so callous because we now know firsthand how much this hurts those affected. However, before we lost our "innocence", truth be told, we probably didn't give any of it much thought.

On this 10th Halloween without Nina, I do my best to ignore all the ghoulishness surrounding this time of year. If I do find I am having difficulty, I try very hard to focus on positive memories of Halloween's past, such as her grade-school costume party where our basement became a makeshift haunted house where blindfolded "witches" and "fairy princesses" shrieked and giggled as they plunged their hands into bowls full of peeled grape "eyeballs" and wet macaroni "brains". Or the photos I have of her in different costumes over the years, from Care Bear to Punk Rocker. Then there is the photo taken of Nina on her last Halloween. No longer of trick-or-treat age, she stayed home to pass out the candy and carved her own Jack-O-Lantern that she is pictured proudly along side, with her ever-present smile and that wonderful twinkle in her brown eyes; such precious memories...

For those with a missing trick-or-treater this Halloween, the first holidays are the most difficult. Though I find they are easier to bear as time marches on, there will always be the awareness that someone so loved is absent from the family gatherings. Remember that this roller-coaster grief-ride brings different feelings with each passing year. It is important to allow those feelings—whatever they may be—and let them happen. Try not to

be waylaid by other's expectations of you. Trust your instincts. Truly, only you know what is best for you.

Cathy L. Seehuetter

TCF St. Paul, MN

In Memory of my daughter, Nina

The Advice I Wish I Got After My Son Died

When my son died, I received a lot of advice. I found people do not know what to say. They default to the things they have been conditioned to say during these times. It came from many different sources, most of which had never lost a child. The advice came from good intentions, but it was hollow. Not at all what I needed in that moment. When someone would tell me it would be OK, I was angry. They would say everything happens for a reason and I should trust God. More anger. Then there was, "Give it time. Time heals all wounds." It doesn't. Then there were the people that tried to facilitate a connection. Here, call Jane. She lost her son, too. I was not in a place to talk to other bereaved mothers and hear all about their experience. Everything felt like pressure towards a direction someone else thought was best for me. Someone that had never stood where I was standing.

If you haven't noticed, there is a lot of anger in grief. It is unavoidable so you should just learn to embrace it early. It made me feel like I was going crazy. Everything made me mad. I hated their advice yet I found myself starting to wonder if I should listen. It didn't resonate, but I was desperate. So I started judging my grief. It made me question everything I was doing and feel as if I was doing it all wrong. That made me more angry.

Then I had a breakthrough. A grief breakthrough. I don't recall the cause or the source, but I suddenly understood what I needed to do. It all made sense.

My epiphany? My grief is only about me. The journey I walk is my own. No one can tell me how to do it. I simply have to do whatever I feel is right in the moment for me. It is not my job to

help make others feel better. I cannot be concerned for how they are doing. I know it sounds harsh and unfeeling. However, there is an "I" in grief. As there should be! It is the only way because MY son died! This was about Cameron and me. No one else. The rest of the world has their own path to follow and they must figure it out on their own. It seemed so simple. Selfish, but simple.

I am no longer afraid to say, "That really sucks!" It does. Then I tell them I am thinking about them and sending love. I really am. Love is all that matters. If I feel the urge to share advice, I simply tell them their grief is unique to them. They have to do whatever is right for them and not compare themselves to anyone else. Don't worry about what anyone else tells you. Just follow your gut. This advice would have saved me so much agony.

Emily's Mom

And Then There Was Hope

Once, in what is now another life, I thought support groups were for someone else. I felt that with research, personal work, discussions with the elders in my family and wise friends, I would find all the answers I needed. This worked well until December of 2002. My son died. The death of my only child changed everything. My standard methods of "self help" were not going to get me through this. I needed more than even Solomon could give me. And I desperately needed hope.

My first meeting at Compassionate Friends was in March of 2003. My son had been gone almost three months; I was traumatized, I could not speak and I was doubtful that I would ever find even an obscure hint of peace in my life. April's meeting was somewhat better. I spoke a few words. In May I was rocked by the dual anticipation of Mother's Day and my son's birthday. In June I participated in the balloon liftoff; I sprained my ankle as we were walking back from the park. That night, as I sat at home with ice on my ankle, I thought about the past five months. I realized that I was a differ-

ent person than I had been earlier in the year. I was no longer the woman who walked into her first Compassionate Friends meeting because I was no longer walking alone. There were others at my side, in front of me, behind me, encouraging me, offering gentle suggestions, understanding and listening as I told my child's story over and over and over again.

I discovered that those who had walked this road before me were holding the lanterns of hope to cast light on my life path. It was these people and only these people who could reach me, who could teach me, whose voices could penetrate my fog, whose hearts could help me to begin the healing process.

By the time I marked the first anniversary of my son's death, I was beginning to discover that I had been transformed into a different person. Like my child whose body had died but whose spirit lived on symbolically in the butterfly, I had become a different person. I physically felt the pain of other parents. The first time I offered advice I sat in wonder at the realization that this very effort brought a little more light into my soul. Part of my healing process became the helping process.

Healing is what we seek, but we will never be "cured". As parents who have lost our children, we will never be the same people we were before our child died. I came to accept this fact. But I also found that we can live with this wound which, despite our initial certainty to the contrary, is not usually fatal. It is forever, it is painful, it is the worst wound a human can feel, but it is not fatal. Even when I was wracked with physical pain in my grief, the light of my Compassionate Friends gave me a new perspective, one of hope.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

*In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX*

I'm Trying

I'm trying not to wake up every morning sad because I don't have him here

starting our day together.

I'm trying not to cry when I eat lunch alone at some of our favorite places. I'm trying not to think that my life will never be as fun again.

I'm trying not to be sad that I don't have him here to put to sleep and kiss goodnight.

I'm trying not to feel so alone.

I'm trying not to keep thinking I should have done more to save him and how did I let him go.

I'm trying not to be mad at God for taking him but to be grateful that he brought this wonderful boy into my life for all these years.

I'm trying to become the person I'm portraying on the outside when inside I'm really just barely keeping it together.

I'm trying to find a reason for me to still be here and not go join him in heaven.

I'm trying to find comfort in the fact that I have family and friends that are here for me if I need them.

I'm trying to be able to look at pictures of him and not be sad.

I'm trying to let all the good memories I have, heal my broken heart.

I'm trying to take all the well wishes, prayers and support I have gotten from friends and family in these past few months and be thankful instead of being reminded of my loss.

I'M TRYING. And though it may take some time, hopefully I'll find a place for myself where it won't be so hard and hurt so bad. And take comfort in knowing that one day I will see my boy again and get to hold his little hand, kiss his chubby cheek and tell him how much I love him, like I did every day for the past 21 years. But for now, I'm trying.

TCF, Honolulu

In Memory of all those who left us too soon.

*We remember you in the morning,
in the nights,
when we look at the stars,
a song, a place, a smell.
You are always with us.*

SIBS

Take a Moment to be Kind to Yourself

My brother Shaun died 20 years ago, on 4/9/1999. He was riding his motorcycle home when a car turned left and didn't yield to oncoming traffic. He did not die instantly; he was bleeding out on the sidewalk. People rushed to his aid while waiting for the ambulance. A young lady held his hand and told him help was on the way. He was taken to Queens Medical Center.

His world ended, mine broke in half and it shattered my parents. Their health was not the best but after he died, it deteriorated fast. My Mom died in July of 2002 and then my Dad died in February of 2003. I was a complete wreck and my husband had

no choice but to watch me unravel. He always fixed everything, but this was the one thing he could not fix.

It has been a struggle, a long road filled with guilt, anguish and sorrow. Every day I asked myself why I had to go through all of this. Anger settled in and it all led to self-destruction, which was what our family did best.

About five years ago, I stopped punishing myself. I finally forgave myself and accepted that I did the best I could with what I had, at the time. I also realized that it is ok to feel everything you feel, there is no right or wrong. Nobody feels exactly what you do but some may understand or share some of the same feelings.

A few months ago, I was driving home from work, totally exhausted and something inside of me clicked. I realized how easy it is for a terrible

crash to happen and all it can take is a blink. I thought about the man who killed my brother with his car. Perhaps all it took was a blink. I don't know, nor will I ever know. But what I know today, is that I don't hate him. I don't blame him for killing my whole family, anymore.

It took me this long to be ok with being OK.

Hope is possible.

I'm not going to lie, the pain never goes away, I certainly have my moments/days. But now I know that it's ok to feel sad sometimes but to still have love for myself. My hope is that one day your cries will be shared with laughter and your tears met with smiles.

Be kind to yourself.

Allow yourself to find happiness.

Surround yourself with good friends, laughter and smiles.

It's ok to be happy, it's ok to smile, it's ok to laugh. Enjoy your life. Be you again.

Written on 9/5/2019

Sabine M., (Shaun's Sister)

Memories Of Your Face

I woke this morning

Finding everything in a haze

Wiping tears from my eyes

I saw your smiling face.

I reached out and touched you

Yet all I could feel was pain

You felt nothing

From your life within a frame.

I spoke, receiving no reply

I told you that I loved you

I asked you

Why?

I'll never have another

No one to take your place

All I have, little brother, are memories

And the picture of your face.

Lisa Wahnsey, TCF/Sarasota, FL

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



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

October Meeting

Meeting October 7 at 7:00 pm at St. Timothy's Church, 16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia.

Hello everyone, we just want to remind you that we are meeting again in the church and we are taking every precaution to make sure you feel safe coming. You are welcome to wear your mask; we have hand sanitizer available; we can be socially distanced and we would love to see you in person again! Please bring your own drink and mask.

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.

- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "Happy Birthday Ryan "Ryfro" 10/26. We love you and miss you."
 - ♥ 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"
 - ♥ Brenda Smith "In memory of my son Billy. Happy 32nd Birthday Billy. We love and miss you so much!"
 - ♥ Mary & Mike Hartnett "In memory of our son Michael. It is so hard to believe you have been gone 7 years. We miss and love you so very much! Love Mom & Dad
 - ♥ Brenda Fields "In memory of Jordan John. I miss you so much! Love always, Mom"
-

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Craft Day will be Saturday, October 30, 2021 from 10 am until 1 pm. We will be meeting at the Plymouth District Library, Plymouth, MI. Masks are required at the library. Please let us know if you are attending by calling Kathy Rambo at 734-306-3930 or email katjrambo@gmail.com.

We will be putting our children's pictures on a paper mache star. You will need to print off pics at an office supply store on a laser printer ... which will not bleed when we use mod podge. You may want to make the photos smaller to fit more on the stars. Supplies are provided (except for pictures). If you don't feel like crafting and would like to spend some time with our members, you are welcome to come have a cup of coffee and a donut with us. Hope you can be there. Any questions, call Kathy or Gail. There will be a sign up sheet and example of the star at the October meeting. Call if you have any questions.



Star size =
9 inches

10 pictures

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

October 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

A Huge Thank You to Rhonda Temple

We would like to thank Rhonda Temple for her many years of service and dedication to our Livonia Chapter. Rhonda joined our group when her daughter Alyssa died in 2006. She will be stepping down as our chapter Treasurer. In memory of her beautiful Alyssa, Rhonda has helped with so many parts of our chapter : Chapter Leader, Treasurer, our Picnic, Bowling Fundraiser, Worldwide Candle lighting/Walk of Trees in Kellogg Park and our Craft group.

The many people you have helped will always remember your comforting ways and your kindness. Thank you Alyssa & Justin & Brandon's Mom!