

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



September 2020  
Volume 32, Number 9

The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

### Chapter Leader

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(734-778-0800)

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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:

**September 3rd** - see info about  
meeting on this page.

**September 12th** - Craft Meeting- see  
pg. 8

**September 15th** - 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

**A Note from our Chapter Leadership** ..... Our next meeting will be on  
September 3rd!

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. Please bring a mask, lawn chair and your own drink.

We will post on our The Compassionate Friends of Livonia Michigan facebook  
page any updates. Please join the facebook page if you have not already done so.

We will have a virtual meeting via Zoom if we cannot meet in the park, due to  
the weather. 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. She will keep  
your email addresses to use on any future Zoom meetings which will most likely  
happen with our Michigan weather.

If you need additional support, these members have offered their phone numbers  
in addition to our TCF Livonia Chapter number (734-778-0800):

Joyce Gradinscak – 734-560-6883	Catherine Walker – 248-921-2938
Mary Hartnett – 313-550-5410	Cindy Stevens – 734-837-3722
Judy Cappelli – 734-674-1073	Kathy Rambo – 734-306-3930
Gail Lafferty – 734-748-2514	

Please take good care of yourselves.....we want you all to be safe.  
Remember: We are all in this together.

We need not walk alone; We are the Compassionate Friends.

### Memories

A time of year approaches which makes  
me sad  
Stores have on sale pens, papers, and  
note pads.  
Blue jeans, shirts, jackets and of course  
shoes  
School is starting – thus for me, a time  
of the blues.

Memories come back when busses start  
to roll,  
Of when my son was with us...of days  
of old.  
Memories of his eleven years of school:  
Crayons, papers, stories, and learning  
new rules...  
Friends, close "buddies", girlfriends,  
and all.

Continued on page 4 1

# **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 to members.*



## ***Let Us Celebrate Their Births***

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

I find myself thinking a great deal about despair. I think about it often enough that I actually looked it up. It means “to lose hope.”

I don't have a great deal of previous experience with despair. But now I belong to a new group. This group knows a great deal about despair. My previous group really didn't.

When I try to think of times I've felt despair before, it mostly takes me back to much younger days and failed romances. In the scheme of things, those problems (and others) no longer seem worthy of despair.

In our bereavement, I believe a big challenge is to cling to our hope...to hope that may be small and quiet and fragile. Like Pandora, the figure in Greek mythology, as the world's unleashed trials and troubles swirl around us, we struggle to shut the lid on the box and preserve that one last potential comfort: hope. It's not easy.

Glasses and braces... yes, you can wear them and still play ball.  
 "Will you buy me an instrument?" I joined band today!  
 "Is this hat too big?" How can I march and make it stay?"  
 "I need a car, come on Mom and Dad... What do you say?"  
 I'll drive a bus, plus work part time... I'll help pay."  
 "Got a school trip tomorrow with the Spanish Class"  
 Drove his car to cash his paycheck... I thought he'd be right back...  
 Yes, seeing school busses still makes me sad.  
 But for my memories... I'm thankful... I'm glad.  
*Jeff Johnson*  
*TCF, Wilmington, N.C.*

### Olivia's Candle

My husband and I lost our baby, Olivia, during pregnancy, and having no funeral or other traditional means of finding a place for our feelings of loss and love for this cherished person, a person many believed never lived at all, we settled on burning a candle for 24 hours every time the death date passes. Beside the candle is this poem:  
*To our beloved Olivia,  
 Whose life-light burned so briefly. You are forever a part of us  
 As we remember and relive  
 The joy with which we discovered you and the sadness with which we accepted your departure.  
 The light and love you lit  
 In us burns on.*  
*Patti Williams TCF*  
*Northeast Georgia Chapter*

### Choosing to Survive

I went to a wedding last weekend. It was the wedding of my son Davey's first love. She is a beautiful girl and I have kept in touch with her since losing my son almost five years ago. When I accepted the invitation, I figured it may be a little difficult for us (my daughter was attending as well), but we wanted to be there for her special day. Boy, did I get that one wrong.

It was brutal and it brought all kinds of pain and what if's that I had been able to keep at bay for awhile.

My son Davey passed away in April 2014, the result of a car accident. It's still very difficult to talk about the immediate aftermath of that night. I was shocked and hysterical and in denial. My son had just landed his dream job three months earlier. The day he died was the day he had finished training and had been assigned to his unit. I just couldn't grasp what had happened. The week of his funeral, I barely remember a thing. I was so angry. Angry at the young men who had been carelessly street racing. Angry that they took off like cowards and left my son there to die alone. Angry at God. Why on earth would he take my baby?

That first year was so awful. I was despondent, I was angry and the worst part was, I felt so alone. I was surrounded by my family who would have done anything to get me through the pain. I just didn't think they could relate. I had lost my child. I had convinced myself that unless someone has lost a child, they just didn't get it. It wasn't true, of course, we were all hurting, in different ways.

I did something that I am convinced saved my life and that was to start seeing a grief counselor. She helped me to understand my grief and how it works. Dealing with so many other emotions along with the pain. There was so much soul searching during this time. I had to figure out how to survive in a life I didn't want or ask for. I had to eventually resolve my anger at God. Although I will never completely understand why my son had to be taken. It is comforting to me to think he was needed for a bigger purpose.

All the hard work I put in with the grief counselor (and continue to put in) has a way of crashing down around me when faced with a trigger. Normally, I keep things safely tucked into my heart and then BAM, something like the wedding comes along. We were robbed of Davey, of his own wedding and maybe a family of his own. I was

seeing people that he knew and grew up with that were getting on with their lives while Davey's was cut short. I was sitting at the wedding and those feelings swirled around me and for a minute, I couldn't breathe. Through all the reading, reflecting and counseling I have done, I was able to calm down. Before, I would just dive right into my pain. Now, I have learned that I can get through these moments even if it does take a while. And then I try to tuck it away until the next trigger.

Those triggers will always come, regardless of how long it has been since Davey passed. I have a beautiful new grandson. When I look at him, I can see Davey. And that makes me both happy and sad and can even trigger that pain.

Losing a child is probably the worst thing one can endure. I have had to become a new person. The old Debbie is gone forever. I have learned the simple things in life are what matters. I have worked hard to find joy in my life again. I have decided that I can be kinder and more grateful for what I do have. I wrote a book, *Follow Your Bliss*, because I want to reach out to others who have lost a child. I want readers to know they aren't alone and to offer love and support to them.

I want to do these things because they honor's my son's memory and they bring me a little bit of peace. And because my son would expect no less from me.

*Debbie Timm*

### Signs

Do any of you believe in signs or messages from your deceased child? I do, and it helps me with the grieving process and to overcome tough days, like her birthday.

Every time I see a penny that shouldn't be there or wasn't there the last time I looked, I think of it as the presence of Samantha. I could be having any type of day – good, bad, indifferent – and when I see a misplaced penny, I instantly sense a presence of her and say to myself "Samantha is

thinking of me". I know this might sound crazy, but it makes me feel happy to believe that she's thinking of her dad and wants to let me know that.

The most impactful penny sighting happened on Samantha's birthday – April 25, 2018. My birthday is on April 27th. Samantha would have been 14 in 2019. (She died in 2006 at the age of 17 months.) I was walking into work, and feeling absolutely horrible. Her birthday and death day are terrible triggers for me, and I was depressed and feeling a very heavy sense of grief that day. As I approached my desk, I saw a penny on my chair. In my 17 years of working at my company, I've never seen a penny on my chair, so this sighting was completely unexpected and a total shock. It wasn't there last night when I left work for the day. I asked around and nobody claimed putting the penny there. I immediately called my wife and said "You're not going to believe what's on my chair! A penny and it wasn't there when I left work last night." She said "What date is on the penny?" I picked it up, looked closely at the date, and couldn't believe my eyes that the date was 2006, the year she died.

I knew Samantha was thinking of me and telling me that she was OK and that I should not be sad. I instantly went from deep longing and sadness to euphoric. It was the best birthday present I've received in the 13 years since Samantha has passed away.

We all know that the grieving process is unique and personal. Some might believe in signs. Others may not. The bottom line is that if it's signs or looking at photos or visiting the grave site that gives you moments of happiness, then embrace it. I did and it's turned some pretty painful days into a positive.

*Jonathan Baer*

***As we grieve the loss of our children and one another's,  
We begin to find a different kind of love than we ever expected to experience.***

***Rosalie Baker, TCF, Rochester, NY***

## *Grief Is Like A River*

My grief is like a river-  
I have to let it flow,  
But I myself determine  
Just where the banks will go.  
Some days the current takes me  
In waves of guilt and pain,  
But there are always quiet pools  
Where I can rest again.  
I crash on rocks of anger--  
But there are other swimmers  
Who know that what I need  
Are loving hands to hold me  
When the waters are too swift,  
And someone kind to listen  
When I just seem to drift.  
Grief's river is like a process  
Of relinquishing the past.  
By swimming in Hope's channel,  
I'll reach the shore at last.

*Cynthia G. Kelley  
TCF, Cincinnati, OH*

## *The Wariness of Grief*

I am from the South. My parents were both Southerners. I have never lived outside the South, in spite of the fact that some would claim Northern Virginia, where I lived for almost 40 years, is not really "part of the South." I maintain that it is.

Friendliness is an entrenched southern virtue. I was indoctrinated in friendliness from a young age. It also happened to be an easy fit with my natural personality and disposition. My husband alleges I can "talk to a post." He's probably right about that.

For my whole life, I have had many friends in many places; friends from childhood, friends from college, friends from work, friends who were neighbors. I made friends walking my dog; I made friends riding the subway. Once my children were born, I made friends with the parents of their friends, made friends with their teachers, made friends with other PTA parents and so on. Many, many friends. Obviously, I was closer to some than others. I maintained more regular contact with some than others.

I did have some experience with betrayal and rejection, but it was not so intense or so painful as to make me

abandon my natural open friendliness. It took losing my son to do that.

I am different now. I think I am still friendly in neutral situations, but it is a guarded friendliness. When I walk the dog, I still greet everyone I meet on the street. I have conversations with many, but these are short, superficial conversations. (These are not to be confused with conversations I may have had with strangers on the street in my most acute days of grief. In those days, I occasionally wept on the shoulders of strangers.)

I have become wary of people.

I am wary of new people. It takes a certain set of circumstances, sometimes forced, for me to even confess to new people that I have lost a child. When contractors come to my house, I take down lots of photos and hide them so I'm not asked questions about any of the shrines to my son. It is rare for me to have such a feeling of safety with someone new that I choose to let them in on my secret.

Sadly, experience has taught me to be wary even of people I've known a long time. I have been surprised by those I was formerly close to who have hurt me or disappointed me. Or who have disappeared. So, I wear my mask and conduct myself carefully.

Recently, I came across this quote: "Oh, the comfort — the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person — having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away."- Dinah Maria Mulock Craik

So, under what circumstances do I feel this comfort? I feel it with my sister, with a few old friends, but mostly, I feel it with the other bereaved parents I've come to know through The Compassionate Friends.

*Peggi Johnson,*

***Where grief is still very fresh, the most important resolution may be the dedication to survive each new day.***

***Bruce H. Conley***

## SIBS

### The Aftermath of Suicide

I had never experienced the death of a close loved one before my brother died. When David died, my world came crashing down around me, shattering me into a million pieces. My brother and I were close, but I had no suspicion that he was contemplating suicide and had been for a long time. The night my sister called to tell me he was dead is etched in my memory forever. If I shut my eyes, I can go back to that time and place almost three years ago and still hear her voice. It is a very painful memory and one that I don't call up, but it is there nonetheless.

The overwhelming feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, despair, and sadness are very vivid. At the same time,

I was outraged at what he had done to us, to me. How dare he do this. I couldn't even begin to guess how many times I said, "I don't believe this is happening."

The first six months was a confusing and emotionally draining period for me. I was obsessed with wanting to have answers, especially from him. I read many books on suicide, and finally after reading Iris Bolton's book, *My Son*, I came to realize what she said was true: "You can ask why a million times but you finally have to let it go, because the person you need the answers from is not here to give them to you. If only for the sake of your own sanity, you have to stop asking why."

Our family drew closer together from this tragedy, and it made me more aware of how much I value and love

them. I also had the support of a good friend who was willing to spend hours talking and crying with me. I still get very angry at my brother for changing our lives so irrevocably. That anger inevitable turns into sadness. I cannot see his smiling face or hear his laughter, or watch him grow into adulthood. Yes, I had dreams for him too. He was an intelligent, warm, sensitive, and caring young man, and I was eager to see what direction his life would take. I can't help but wonder what he would be like today. I miss him very much.

I will never agree with his solution, but it was his choice to make and I have to learn to live with it. I am absolutely certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that I will see him again. Only then will I get answers to my questions. I have no choice but to wait until that time.

*Nicki Wright*

*TCF, MO-KAN, Kansas*

### Big Sister, Little Brother

We grew up together—

Big sister, little brother

I took care of you, until you were old enough to care for yourself.

Though you didn't say it, I knew you loved me.

We played in the sunlight, you and I  
Remember the games of "Mother May I" and "Hide and Seek"?

Sure we had our fights, all siblings do,  
But through it all we never lost our love for each other.

Now you're gone. I'll never see you again

Except the memories of those sunny days.

You will forever be sixteen--far too young to die.

You had your whole life to live.

I'll always grieve, but I must go on.

Still, without you, I play alone in the shadows.

*Author unknown, TCF, MI*

### 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

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](http://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](http://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 Thursday 7-9; 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, Rose Hatchett, 517-270-3308.



### 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.

- ♥ Elizabeth Golen "In memory of Andrew. we love and miss you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff, Blair, Rose & Teddy"
- ♥ Susan Wobig "In memory of Michael Ryan. In loving memory of my son Mike on his birthday and angel day. Always in our hearts"
- ♥ Judy Cappelli "In memory of my son Christopher. God holds you in his hands, I hold you forever in my heart. Gone 6 years and I miss you each and everyday. Love you Christopher"
- ♥ Diane Arquette " In memory of Ricky. Dear Ricky, your brutal murder of being beaten to death by 5 men never leaves my mind. You did nothing to deserve this. I took you off life support after nine days. You fought for your life. My heart is crushed.Until we meet again, I love and miss you. Time does not heal. Love you always, Mom"
- ♥ "A love gift given in memory of my Son, Richard "Billy" Kirchoff on his 31st Birthday! We Love and Miss you so very much. Happy Birthday Billy "

## 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.*

Mary Arevalo, whose beloved son, **Carl Moore**, Born 11/13; Died 7/6; 48 years

Terry and Sue Berlin, whose beloved son, **Zachary** Born 7/10; Died 2/23; 27 years

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

Gordie & Sharla Statham, whose beloved son and brother, **Gordie**, Born 7/29; Died 7/12; 29 years

My sincere apologies that there was a mistake made in the last newsletter listing of New Members. The listing for Ken Ventura should have read Ken Ventura, whose beloved daughter, **Kristen**, Born 4/10; Died 6/14; 31 years

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## Time Heals

They told me that to comfort me  
When my child died.

Four years and two children later  
I think maybe they lied.

Friends and family tried their best.  
God sheltered me under his wing.  
Still, the mother inside me  
Cries for that child,

And time hasn't changed a thing.

The gaping wound granulated to a  
scar. The tears are now slower to spill,  
But deep in my heart there's an empty  
hole That only that child could fill.

No, I don't really think that it's true  
about time, For I know that the love  
bond remains.

Time never heals the loss of a child,  
You just learn to cope with the pain.

*Marsha Fredrickson  
TCF, SD*

## Birthdays That Will Never Be

Today is your birthday and here I stand  
At your grave with flowers in hand  
For this is the day that you were born  
That you're not here, it's a day to mourn

I stand here and tears run down my face  
I want to hold you and feel your embrace  
To hear "Mom, I love you" just once  
again To have things the way they should  
have been It hurts that flowers I have to  
give you

That parties and presents will no longer  
do To sing "Happy Birthday" with ice  
cream and cake

That this can't be makes my heart break  
Because all I have are the ones gone past  
The birthdays of yesterday will have to  
last

But I wish you "Happy Birthday" and  
remember those days

Of your joy and laughter and gentle ways  
In those ten years you were such a pleasure

I'm thankful the memories are mine to  
treasure

This day will never be the same for me  
As I think of the birthdays that will  
never be

*Carolyn Bryan In loving memory of  
John Michael Bryan TCF, Orange Park/  
Jacksonville*



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*

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### 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



### September Craft Day

Our craft day will be on Saturday, September 12, 2020 at the home of Kathy Rambo from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. We will be painting and decorating a butterfly box shown above. These boxes can be used for our children's special items. Cost: \$3.00  
Any questions you can e-mail Kathy at [Katjrambo@gmail.com](mailto:Katjrambo@gmail.com) or call/ text Kathy at (734) 306-3930 or Gail at (734) 748-2514.  
Hope you can attend.