

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**March 2018**  
**Volume 30, Number 3**

**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 - March 1-** First time tables, sibling table, topic table: What are some other things you might do to keep people "saying your name"?

**March 10-** Bowling fundraiser -pg. 7

**March 20 - 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@gmail.com.

**March 24** - Craft Day - see page 8

### **Reflections of March**

March is a month of renewal. The dormant trees begin to stir; the birds optimistically sing of Spring; the winds, sometimes violent, wake us up; perhaps we need a "shake" out of our winter lethargy; an awakening.

There is that urge to plant, to nourish, to grow a tree or a flower. There is the primordial urge to feel your hands digging in the warming earth. Perhaps we plant because we know that someone will see the results, as we have enjoyed the results of others' work. It could be called a debt of renewal, a repayment for that which we have enjoyed. As we nourish small seedlings, we visualize the end results. That tree may die, as our children did. That tree may flourish beautifully, or it may meet ultimate disaster, but if that tree does well, it could be a source of great pleasure and of beauty for many coming years. We can believe that a seedling will be a glorious tree enjoyed by many. It's a nice dream.

"To all things there is a season" and as life goes by, we simply cannot afford to miss the seasons, the renewals, the changes for new growth. Regardless of our griefs and regrets, life goes on, and we must try not to miss a season. Life simply will be, whether we participate or not. Someone will benefit from constructive growth, if we can find the energy to make the effort.

Severe grief, for a time, reduces our interest and our ability to participate fully in life. With a low energy level and little initiative and with our hopes for the future severely damaged, it requires great effort for the bereaved to learn to again enjoy the small things that make up most of our lives. Our hopes for the future are so damaged that there is little incentive to work today for the future. The things that exist today comprise the basics of our future. We run a risk and a danger of missing the good things that are to be, because we do not have the wish to participate in the things that are today.

Although we need a time of some withdrawal, some time to ponder the unanswered questions, some time to heal, we also need to be aware of the lives that are passing. Regardless of our grief, life simply goes on, and there is much good that we risk losing if we stay too long in a state of suspense of the present and a sad review of the past.

A part of learning to "accept the unacceptable" is to learn to make the effort to sort out the good memories and take them with us into a future that will be happy again.

There comes a time when the harsh winter of our damaging grief will give way to some awakening; a time when we, like nature, can shake off some of

*(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*

Names available only to subscribers.



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

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*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.*

### New Members

Pat Schroka whose beloved son; **Michael**, Born 1/13; Died 12/17; 36 years

Cathy Zieleniewski, whose beloved son; **Zachary**, Born 6/25; Died 12/11; 32 years

the lethargy and see and feel the re-  
newals life offers. Our choice is to re-  
member that we could not control the  
advent of disaster. We can only control  
our response. Our choice is now only  
in the way in which we respond to the  
necessity to pick up the threads of our  
life and go on.

We owe it to ourselves, Compassion-  
ate Friends, to make a positive effort.  
We can hope that those buffeting  
winds of March can help us awaken  
to the renewals of Spring and put the  
“winter of our disaster” in its place,  
now a part of our ongoing lives.

*Dayton Robinson, Jr.*  
*Tuscaloosa, AL TCF*

### Why We Still Go to TCF

“Are you still involved with that  
group? Aren’t you over it yet? Why do  
you go?”

1. Because we never want the world  
to forget our child, so what we do  
we do in his or her name.
2. Because when we reach out to help  
someone else, we also help our-  
selves.
3. Because someone was there for us  
when we needed it most; now the  
best way to say “thank you” is to  
pass it on by being there for others.
4. Because it is the one thing we do  
that can bring something positive  
out of tragedy.
5. Because we have found in TCF  
better friends and closer bonds than  
we ever thought possible. Here we  
can cry and hug people even if we  
don’t know their last name or what  
they do for a living. And it doesn’t  
matter.
6. Because a few people are qualified  
to walk up to a newly bereaved  
family and say, “I know how you  
feel.” And because we can, we  
must.
7. Because somewhere we need to  
talk, too; and remember and share.  
We are further along than many  
around us, but we never forget.
8. Because many of us believe that  
one day we will meet our child or  
brother or sister again, and he or  
she will ask, “So what did you do

with your life after I left?” And we  
will have an answer.

9. Because our presence might help  
newly bereaved families under-  
stand that they will survive and  
even laugh again.
10. Because we love cold coffee, cook-  
ies, and hard metal chairs.

*Richard Edler*

*TCF, South Bay/L.A., California, Chapter*

### Saying Your Name

Dear Friends, I think one of the hard-  
est things to get use to after the death  
of a child it not hearing your child’s  
name being said by anyone. After  
the initial shock of the first couple of  
weeks where everyone is reminiscing  
there seems to come the silence. That  
terrible, painful, silence where no one  
is saying your child’s name.

It is as though people have forgot-  
ten them immediately after they  
have gone. It is the worst feeling in  
the world. You want to shout to the  
world, “Why can’t you talk about my  
child, why won’t you say my child’s  
name!?” It is something that I have  
never gotten use to and never will.  
How do you tell everyone that it is ok  
to talk about your child? When Kirk  
died I asked the counselor at our high  
school if he would help me get the  
kids to write stories about Kirk at his  
web site. He did take a letter around to  
the senior class, but failed to tell them  
what was going on.

He passed it out without explanation  
because at the time our high school  
was of the impression that to talk  
about death, to mention our child’s  
name, would not be good for the kids.  
Here was a class that had faced the  
death of 3 kids whom they knew in  
a short amount of time and no one  
wanted to talk about it. I have since  
made it clear that I would not let that  
happen again and am working toward  
having a written policy in our school  
district that would address the death of  
a child and try to help comfort the par-  
ents. It hasn’t been easy, but not being  
able to mention my child’s name has  
been a hard thing to accept. So accept  
it I won’t.

There are so many ways to keep your  
child’s memory alive. Here are a few  
suggestions that have been given to  
me that I would like to pass on to you.  
I will not say that some of these will  
be easy to do. Some of these will be  
harder to do than others, but most are  
doable.

- Donate books to your local library  
or your school library with the name  
of your child inside.

- Plant a tree with a plaque. Many  
parks and schools will allow you to  
plant trees in memory of loved ones.

- Give a scholarship to a group or  
organization that your child was in-  
volved in.

There are so many ways to keep your  
child’s name out in the real world.  
Don’t be afraid to try different ways of  
doing it. Don’t feel like you are pathet-  
ic or crazy. When famous people die,  
we find all kinds of ways to keep their  
names on peoples’ lips. Why shouldn’t  
we be able to do it for the people we  
love?

*Jim Balthazor, Kirk’s Dad*  
*TCF Phoenix, AZ*

### Daffodils

In the spring, I will bring daffodils  
to you with a prayer, after the cold,  
snowy winter is over and gone.

I will sit on the grass and sing the  
songs that we shared, knowing that  
your boundless spirit still lives on.

I’ve walked the path of sorrow. It’s  
helped me to grow. Through the  
tears have come my strength and my  
healing.

My heart, once wounded and broken,  
is mended and filled with deep love for  
everyone in all that I do.

And every warm, sunny spring, I will  
bring yellow daffodils and cherish the  
memories of you.

### How We Heal

I have always had a dog. Rusty, Te’,  
Gypsy, Misha, Deidra, and after our  
son Aaron was born, Obie (as in Obie-  
Wan Kenobi). After we lost Aaron  
our only child, we found ourselves  
alone in our house for the past 3 years.  
We’ve toyed with the idea of another

dog but each time we considered, up came another excuse.

Stories of how lonely senior citizens “awake” upon receiving a pet were not new to us. Nor were the stories of the therapeutic power of a pet on terminally ill patients. When my wife came home telling me some friends of ours were about to take ownership of a new puppy, along with the website of the breeders, I thought I would give a look. That’s all it took. Once I saw the picture of the plump little puppy carrying the pinecone I knew it was time to make a phone call. So up we trotted into the mountains where we lay dibs on that fat little puppy and a couple of days later we brought Tess, the 8 week old, overweight, pine-cone clutching Jack Russell Terrier home.

Now my knowledge of Jack Russell’s were no more than knowing about that cute little dog on Frazier, no more, no less. At 57 years old I figured I could certainly handle a puppy! As my wife says, “Somebody ought to V8 me to the forehead.” Tess is a real live running, jumping, biting, pooping, peeing ball of energy. AND WE LOVE HER!

Now I’m not so delusional to think for an instant that this furry little creature would or could ever take the place of Aaron; not ever, and his loss hurts almost as much today as the day he died. However, Tess has brought an energy, spirit and love that has eluded our house since Aaron’s passing. The fact that we now have something quite more than our grief to pay attention to, something to occupy our time rather than TV and silence, something that demands our love and attention (and liver treats) has become a blessing that has put years back into this old body and our silent house. The fun she has brought us as we train her and teach her tricks, and she can do tricks, is almost as fun as the peace and comfort she brings as she nuzzles next to us on the sofa and falls asleep. What a beautiful little animal. She too is one of Gods creatures surely brought to us when we needed comfort that we didn’t even know we needed.

As we begin the fourth year without our son, each day seems a little easier to get through because of this bundle of fur. For this we are grateful. Perhaps you should investigate the opportunity to bring a pet into your life and add some happiness back into your home...whaddya say Tess?

*Stew Levett - Pikes Peak TCF*

## Vulnerable

I have found in the years that have passed that I am most vulnerable at times of remembrance.

The word “Anniversary” no longer holds a promise of celebration. Instead, holidays and birthdays, family gatherings and otherwise joyous occasions contain an undertow of sorrow. If I get caught up in it, I quickly get pulled under and wind up gasping for breath. It is ironic that the presence of the absence can be so emotionally devastating.

You’ll excuse me if the bounce is gone from my step. Or the depth of my laughter has changed.

Issues that were once monumental, now seem insignificant. Please excuse me if I don’t commiserate that your car needs repair or the faucet leaks. My focus on life has forever changed.

You’ll excuse me if my spirit seems lost during holidays of any kind. They are now days “to bear,” rather than days to share and enjoy.

You’ll pardon me if I bring you down or make you feel discomfort, and I’ll pardon you for not understanding that my life will never be the same; that although I’ll survive, there will always be sorrow.

*Joan Fischer,  
TCF - Nassau County Chapter, NY*

## Letting Go

One evening at the kitchen table my four-year-old daughter Barbara watched with interest as I was preparing to mail out some letters concerning The Compassionate Friends.

She showed a keen interest in the logo sticker I attached to the corner of a large brown envelope. Her big blue eyes took on a seriousness I had never

seen before as she asked, “Mommy, why is the ‘kid’ so far away from his hands?”

I replied as honestly as I could “Because the ‘kid’ has died and the hands are a mommy’s and a daddy’s reaching for the child.” She turned those blue eyes to meet mine and said “I think you’re wrong, Mom. I think the hands are letting him go.” How remarkably perceptive children are!

I sat there astounded by what she had suggested: then I grabbed a pen to write down what she had said. This was, I thought a sage piece of wisdom from someone who believes in old Santa and the Tooth Fairy and wishing on stars.

In her innocent way, she made me see I was still reaching. It has been two years since BJ. was still-born. But I continue to reach for something. Just what that something is, I don’t know, but I’ll know what it is when I find it. Perhaps then part of me can let go.

Part of me will never let go. Barbara’s comment made me wonder though. Do children sense that death is a process of letting go, that letting go is okay for those whose time it is to let go?

I don’t have an answer yet, but maybe my blue-eyed Barbara does. Maybe, just maybe, all children do!

*Edith Fraser  
TCF. Winnipeg, Canada*

## Send Back The Noise

It’s way too quiet here, since our son is not around. I’d pay any price to again hear the sound of a basketball rhythmically hitting the ground; or to answer the question, “Dad, can you make this shot? Pass the ball, probably not!” His bedroom looks more like a sporting goods store. But those balls, gloves and cleats aren’t used anymore. Soccer, basketball, football or lacrosse; just one more game, win, tie or a loss. I’d buy one more ticket, regardless of the cost. It’s too quiet around here; things aren’t the same, I’d settle for a sound of a video game. I know it’s not possible to get back our boys; so please God could you just send back the noise?

# SIBS

## Things Everyone Should Know About Sibling Grief

Tragic as it was—hard as it was to suddenly inherit two sons, and “As much as I missed her—I still felt sorrier for my parents, for her children, for her close friends, for everyone but me. I’m just the sibling, I thought. How wrong I was. How wrong so many of us are about siblings and grief”.

These two experiences have given me unique insight into sibling grief. I’ve experienced how the death of two different siblings, at two different times of my life, and in two unique sets of circumstances has impacted my family and me. These two death experiences were completely different. My understanding and the impact these deaths,

based on my age when they died, was completely different. But, both of my sisters’ deaths had a profound impact on my life.

There are many things people need to learn about siblings and grief. Here are some I would like everyone to know.

Sibling grief is often misunderstood—by parents, families, friends, and counselors, even by the siblings themselves. So much focus is given to the parents of the lost child, to the children of the lost parent, to the spouse of the lost adult sibling. And, rightly so. But, what about the siblings? What about the ones who, like me, have grown up with the deceased? Who believed they would have a lifetime with their sister or brother? Who now face that lifetime alone?

Siblings may feel “trumped” by the grief of other family members. I sure

felt this way, and it’s common, since the focus is usually on the parents if a young sibling dies and on the surviving spouse or children if an older sibling dies. This may lead to minimizing a sibling’s own loss.

Surviving children do, unfortunately, end up taking the fallout from parents’, siblings’, or other family members’ mistakes, emotional blowups, or neglect. In many ways, siblings often experience a double loss: the loss of their sister or brother, and the loss of their parents (at least for a time, but sometimes, permanently). I know this from experience. Though my parents did the best they could, after my youngest sister died, our entire family was different. My mom retreated into her own grief, staying in her room, depressed and sick for years. My dad retreated into work and anything to take his mind from his pain. Luckily, I was already on my own, in college, at the time; my younger siblings weren’t so lucky. At 9, 11, 14, and 17 years old, they grew up with a completely different set of parents than I had. I tried to step in as a “parent” figure over the years, but the separation from my parents in their time of need profoundly influenced their lives. It profoundly influenced my life. It profoundly changed our family.

Even adult siblings will feel the loss deeply. The pain isn’t less simply because you’re older. In fact, in many ways, it’s harder. You understand more. You know what it means to die, and you will feel the pain of the loss in a different way than young children, who still haven’t developed abstract thinking and understanding.

### **. Grieve your loss**

My best advice for siblings in grief: Feel the loss as long as you need to, and give yourself time to heal. Because sibling loss is so misunderstood, you may receive messages that make you feel like you should be “over it by now.” They don’t know sibling loss. Now, you do. It takes time. Lots of time. It’s not about

### ***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](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 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.



“getting over” the loss of a sibling. You don’t get over it. You create your life and move on, when you’re ready. But you will always remember your brother or sister—the missing piece of your life.

I once heard someone say, “When a parent dies, you lose the past. When a child dies, you lose the future. When a sibling dies, you lose the past and the future.” That is the grief of a sibling—grief for what was past, and grief for what should have been the future. Just remember these things, my friends. Remember to be there for siblings in grief. You can be the difference in helping them create a bright future, even if they now must do so without their beloved sibling.

*Dr. Christina Hibbert*

### Image of Winter

When February comes there is finally an end in sight to the long winter. Sometimes, melting snow reveals the green tips of an early crocus or even the exquisite blossom itself, a soft flower of hope invading a harsh landscape of graying snow and biting wind and ominous sky. A small promise of life to come.

My heart, grieving for my son who died, was like that image of winter. For somehow even during the darkest, coldest moments, an unexpected sign of hope would intrude. And as the hours and days and months dragged on, my heart finally learned once again to be open to the promise of

new life. Painful memories melted into loving ones. Life that seemed forever dormant once again sprang forth from my heart.

In living hopefully and lovingly, the seasons of the heart can change. The loving memories of your special child, like the flower in the snow, can be the beginning of the end of winter.

*Maryann Kramer*  
TCF Arlington Heights, IL

**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 Tom Jr; 2/16. We love and miss you”
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann “In memory of our sons; Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr. & Bryan “Bryfo” Soupis considered a son to our family & Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey, Jim “Jimmy” Vick”
- ♥ Glenn & Carol Mead “In loving memory of Bobby our son & brother on his 3rd anniversary. You are forever loved. Love, Mom, Dad, Katie & DJ”
- ♥ JoAnne Tappan “In memory of Kevin Joseph, with all my love, Mom”
- ♥ Richard & Mary Bodnar “In memory of Mike Gagnon. Mike we love & miss you so much. Love, Mom, Rich & Curtis”
- ♥ Ray & Michele Schmidt “In loving memory of our niece, Erika Anstett on her 36th birthday. Love, Aunt Michele & Uncle Ray”
- ♥ Brendolyn Jasper “In memory of Jeff. Happy 38th Birthday Jeff. Love, Mom & Kym”
- ♥ Joyce Gradinscak “In memory of Adam. 13th year missing your smile. Love, Mom, Dad, Jamie & Dave”
- ♥ Greg & Sharon Black “In memory of Jordan Black. Miss you more each day. Love, Mom, Dad & Stephanie”



## The Compassionate Friends

### 10th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

*In loving memory of all the children who died too soon*

Saturday, March 10, 2018 at 1:00 pm  
(Registration will begin at 12:15 pm)

Westland Bowl  
5940 N. Wayne Road  
Westland, MI 48185

(On east side of Wayne Rd ¼ mile north of Ford Rd just past Red Lobster)

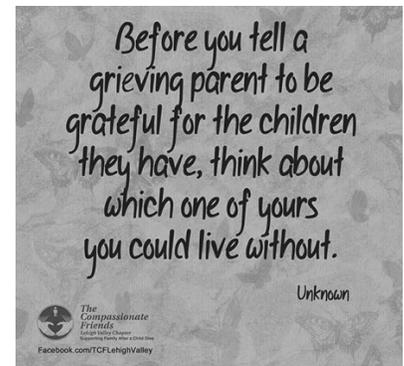
**Any questions please contact Cindy Steves @ 734-837-3722  
Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410**

\$25 per person

(Includes: 3 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza)  
**Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes**

**Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)**  
**Mail to: 25164 Hanover St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125**

**OPEN TO PUBLIC**



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

March 2018

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



### March Craft Day

We'll be making string bracelets with charms and beads at St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church from 10 am until 1 pm on March 24th. All supplies will be supplied but if you have some buttons or charms from your child or their clothing that you would like to use, please bring them with you. Any questions, please contact Kathy Rambo at 734-306-3930 or email [Katjrambo@gmail.com](mailto:Katjrambo@gmail.com). There will be samples at the meeting and a sign up sheet. Cost: \$5.00