

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



September 2025
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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
(734-778-0800)

Newsletter Editor

Brenda Brummel
10531 Calumet Trail
Gaylord, MI 49735
810-623-1691
bbwriter59@aol.com

Treasurer

Mary Hartnett
5704 Drexel
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

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 4 - 7:00 pm - Meeting:
see page 7

September 16th, Tuesday, at 6:00 pm.

**TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern 37714
Six mile Rd. Livonia. It is in the Laurel
Park Mall.** Contact Joyce Gradinscak,
734-560-6883, you can text or call her
No Craft meeting until further notice.

**** If any of you who are having
the newsletter mailed to you would be
willing to receive it online, we would
appreciate it. The cost of postage and
printing has continued to go up. Just
email Brenda at
brendabrummel@me.com**

Communicating with My Son

Eighteen months ago, I dedicated a bench to Philip. It's in a space Philip would like, out in the natural world, with abundant wildlife and wonderful views across hills and sea.

I go there often to spend time alone with my beloved son. I sit on the bench, look at the vistas, and remember our family as it used to be. I talk to Philip. I make him promises; I ask for his guidance. I muse on what his life would be like now. I tell him how deeply I love him, how missing him gets harder with each passing year. I tell him about his brothers, about his sister-in-law and his little nephew, both of whom he never met. I tell him how important he is to us. I tell him that we will never forget him, that though our lives are five years past his death, we still think of him all the time and want him with us. I tell him that I am having a terribly hard time accepting that he has died, and that I am doing the best I can.

I have no idea if I am communicating with a Philip who has survived death or with myself, who hopes he has. Sometimes I think I feel an impatient nudge, a sort of, "Get on with it, Mom, it's not what you think" message. Sometimes I feel his arms around me in compas-

sionate and understanding. Sometimes I don't feel any response at all.

I am grateful for these private times with my child. Whether he lives on in some other sphere—and how I hope he does!—or whether he resides only in our deepest hearts, there is an honoring of him in these conversations, a recognition of his existence and its importance, that matters very much to me.

I believe that we all need to find our individual ways of keeping the channels to our children open. My conversations with Philip may seem odd to some people, but they are right for me. I encourage you to honor your own private ways of communicating with your beautiful child, whatever they are. If you are searching for the channel that will work for you, consider what some other bereaved parents have found helpful: poetry, painting, journal writing, hiking in the natural world, daydreaming, music, meditation, lighting candles, wearing a deceased child's clothing, sitting in his/her room, playing a sport she/he loved, among many, many others. May the time spent in private dialogue with your child bring you peace-filled moments, a renewed sense of connection, and strength to continue the difficult journey we are all on.

*Kitty Reeve
TCF Marin County and San Francisco*

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 for members



September

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

Where Do I Go?

Now that you're gone, where do
I go

to see your fair smile
to hear your tingling giggle
to smell your dank hair after a
swim
to listen to your questions
to touch your gentle cheek
to feel your bear hug?

Where do I go
to share all my years of
wisdom
to find someone who'll tell me
truth
to answer the phone that won't
ring
to tell you I'm sorry
to know that I am loved and to
pour out my love and my
tears?

I shall go
to the pictures that hold you
forever
to the books we shared
to the music you taught me to
love
to the woods we explored as
one
to the memories that never
fail
to the innermost reaches of
my heart
to where we are always
together.

Marcia Alig
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

Bread Crumbs—Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have.
They are what is left behind after the
death of our child. They are our memo-
ries and our mementos.
A bread crumb is the little answering
machine cassette tape that says "Hi,
it's me. Leave a message at the beep."

We may be the only people with a
cassette tape in our safe deposit box.
It's not much, a few quick words, but
it's his voice—a small crumb from the
original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt
that I still can't part with, so I wear it
for good luck on special days. A bread
crumb is the last Father's Day card he
wrote in his own hand before he went
off to college.

*Thanks for everything Dad, especially
the \$. My years at home were better than
words can say and I never took anything
for granted. I've had the best childhood
anyone could have. Thank you for the
ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I
love you. Mark*

I call these things crumbs because
they are a disappointing piece of the
real thing, but treasured because they
are all we have.

I also think there is a second way
of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a
part of children's stories symbolizing
signposts along the way to help lead us
out of the forest—to find our way back
to the land of the living, at least if the
birds don't eat them.

I like to think that the return from
grief is like finding our own way out
of the forest. The way is marked by
great changes or signposts if we will
only follow the bread crumbs. I think
of them as gifts left behind by our
children. They change us and they lead
us out of the forest—but at a very dif-
ferent place than we first went in. Here
are three I have found. Maybe you will
find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is
important and what is not. We suffer
fools, superficial cocktail parties, and
convenience friends poorly. We seem
to develop an immediate impatience
for the meaningless and the trivial. On
the other hand, we pick up an incred-
ible sensitivity to the world around us
that we did not have before. We watch
the news differently. We value people
more than things. We live more in the
moment and less in the future because
we know that sometimes "tomorrow
doesn't come."

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road
back. After the loss of a child and a
period of emptiness, we do eventually
come back. But we come back differ-
ently—and I believe better—than the
person that entered that awful forest.
With our new understanding of priori-
ties, we listen again to "that still small
voice" that we silenced in the race to
climb the career ladder or have the
"perfect life" or do what our parents or
teachers thought we "should" do. We
find new courage to be the person we
really are.

We begin living from the inside out
instead of the other way around—from
a sense of what is important, not what
is expected. From a life of "what's in
it for me?" to "how can I help you?"
We discover new and compassion-
ate friends, and sometimes drift away
from old ones. We go from a thousand
name Rolodex of contacts to a handful
of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual
center and an inner peace. We become
unafraid to die, at the same time we
are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have
noticed. We seem to get anointed with
an ability to help someone else. You
know what I mean. We didn't want
it. We didn't ask for it. But we got it,
anyway. It's almost like a giant invis-
ible radar screen gets mounted on our
head and we now pick up vibrations
from other people in need. And we
find that we really can help. People
seek us out. People who don't know
what to say when a child dies call us
and ask: "Could you please go over?"
We know we can and will, if only to
listen. I am reminded of the story of a
little boy who arrived home late from
school. "Where have you been?" his
mother asked. "I was helping Timmy
who broke his bike," the child an-
swered. "But, Honey," the mother
said. "You don't even know how to fix
a bike." "I know Mom," came the re-
ply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help some-

one else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. Anew sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "there is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in State Two we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

Rich Edler

In Memory of my son, Mark

THE ROOM

How many people have suggested to you in subtle and not so subtle ways that you'd be better off if you'd only go ahead and get rid of your child's things and redo the room? You see, they think that the holding on to these things is morbid. These people, who have never suffered the loss of one of their children, really do not understand that you have to do your grief work, and whether you do this sad task now or later really doesn't affect the length or depth of your pain.

Some parents need to make the changes and decisions about personal belongings as soon as possible after the death. Having the chore ahead of them is more painful than the doing. These parents are advised, however, to go slowly when disposing of belongings. It may seem to you, also, that not seeing or having anything around to remind you of your dead child will somehow make your pain less. Later, though, when your grief has softened, you may find you need that special something, but by then it's too late.

On the other hand, you may try to keep everything, and it may take many months and several acts of sorting through the belongings at intervals before you're able to decide on just the special things you want to keep as mementos. As time goes by, you will be able to let go of the less important things without it ripping you to pieces. Not everything will forever have the same value for you. You may change in how you feel and find that it comforts instead of hurts to see your subsequent child wearing some of the baby's clothes, or that catching a glimpse of an old familiar shirt on one of your teenagers brings a warm feeling.

Whether you've made changes or haven't been able to make changes, it's okay. There is no rule about when you do it, so don't let well-meaning friends or relatives make you feel guilty because your needs don't meet

their timetables. What we would like to suggest to you is, though there is no rules about when you do it, that you have as a goal eventually making the changes, otherwise the room and things become a shrine, and if you have surviving children or a spouse that may find it very difficult to live in this atmosphere forevermore. If they could be honest with you, many would tell you they don't want their dead sibling closed up in his or her room, as though their dying was something for which they're being punished. Instead, bring the record player and records into the den, or use the backpack and tent or whatever, because it comforts them to feel that their sibling has once again become a part of the family and not relegated to "the room".

I don't think I know of anyone who hasn't kept some belongings of their dead child, so that must be normal. What we learn after the death is that life is tenuous at best, and rather than hanging on to unchanged rooms, try to value the important people who are left in this life, be they family or friends, and savor them along with the memories of your dead child. For when all is said and done, those memories are truly the important part of what you have left of your child. That's a truth that doesn't need changing.

Anonymous

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

(continued on page 7)

Courage

My brother died three years ago when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident when he fell while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have, too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for

him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said, "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

I do not make choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe is right and important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I

lost the most important person in the world to me.

Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone. I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

Patricia Kelley

TCF Richmond, VA

*In Memory of my brother, Sean 8/24/76
- 8/28/93*

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

Gail Lafferty - Sudden Death - (734) 748-2514

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 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



So, on the hard days, you must remind yourself:
You wouldn't trade the love to escape the
grief. You wouldn't erase the happiness
to avoid the pain. And you will endure
a lifetime of missing, for the
privilege of having loved.

-Jameson Arasi

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

Meeting is Thursday, September 4th. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: Two of the articles talk about where we can go to communicate with our children. Do you have a special place that you go when you want to be with your child(ren)?

**** *If any of you who are having the newsletter mailed to you would be willing to receive it online, we would appreciate it. The cost of postage and printing has continued to go up. Just email Brenda at brendabrummel@me.com*

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 is on back page.

♥ Ken Ventura in loving memory of **Kristen Ventura**

♥ Judy Cappelli in loving memory of **Christopher**: "Forever with the angels, always in my heart ♥ Love and miss you Christopher."

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

Bent But Not Broken

The beautiful flowering tree planted in Nina's memory on Memorial Day a year short of a decade ago (by her favorite cousins) looked so regal and smelled so delicious yesterday. I like to think it flowers this time of year as a special birthday message from my "baby girl". However, with the vicious storm we had last evening I watched the soft white petals drift and swirl to the ground, as if a deluge of tears from a breaking heart. Today, it sits almost bare - a few petals still hanging on for dear life, unable to let go, desperate to regain its former beauty.

I can't help but see a symbolism

in that tree that I can associate with. It is as if it stands as a monument to my grief, the ebb and flow of emotions that I have felt for the past nine years since Nina no longer walks this earth. When the tree is in full flower it seems much like family life "before". Of course there were short-term crises that now seem insignificant in comparison and life's speed bumps along the way, but all in all, pretty good. I mean, at least our family was intact. When the leaves were suddenly stripped of their branches and thrown to the ground in the furious hailstorm, it was like our lives after Nina's sudden death; thrown suddenly into a world of intense pain and sorrow, trying desperately to survive the unthinkable.

But, yet this morning, the tree stands, more barren and most definitely battered, grief and loss. And nine years later, much like Nina's tree, though the storm has taken its toll, we will still manage to be upright; definitely bent, but still standing. And somehow, life roars on.

*With gentle thoughts,
Cathy Seehuetter
TCF, St Paul, MM
In Memory of my daughter, Nina*

Shrines

People have amassed shrines for years. In Prague there is a wall dedicated to John Lennon; flowers

and photos adorn the gates of Princess Diana's home in London; an eternal flame shines for the unknown soldier; Shinto shrines celebrate wind, rain, mountains, trees and rivers; we bury our dead and mark the grave with a headstone. We want a marker of those things valuable and important to us. That is how we feel about our dead children; we don't want our children to be forgotten, we must remember them, others must remember them.

My son's boots are my shrine to him.

His boots are the only thing left from his accident. They sit there, worn but whole, and I see him, I think of him, I remember him, I love him. His boots do that for me. They create an instant recall of him, his person, his character, his life.

Don't tell me to put the boots away, don't tell me that it is unhealthy to hold on to things that recall his memory. It is the purpose of the shrine, and yes, I want to remember my son. I want you to remember my son. He had value. He had purpose. He was good and right. Recall that gift every time you see his boots. Revel in his glory, laugh with him, smile with him, embrace his life and take him with you, his memory is valuable, he is valuable. Say his name.

*Marian Lambeth
TCF Tallahassee, FL
In Memory of my son Wyatt Lambeth*

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

September 2025

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: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

A PhD in Pain

I didn't take an entrance examination. I didn't apply for admission. I didn't register for classes. I never completed any assignments. I didn't write or defend a dissertation.

I didn't wear a cap, gown, or hood at graduation. I didn't walk to "Pomp & Circumstance."

I don't have this diploma framed on my wall. I don't have letters I use after my name.

But my son died five years ago.

So, I have a PhD in Pain.

I never wanted one.

Peggi Johnson