

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



April 2023
Volume 35, Number 4

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:

April 6 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

**April 18 - 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner at:
Grand Tavern 37714 Six mile Rd.
Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park Mall.**

Contact Kathy Rambo (734-306-
3930); you can text, call or e-mail her at
Katjrambo@gmail.com.

Craft Day - April 29 - see page 8

**July 7-9: 46th National Conference,
Denver, CO**

Save the Date

**May 4th - Annual Balloon
Lift**

Bring you family and friends to our annual Balloon Lift. Balloons will be provided. Bring a small favorite snack to share with others. A special event to honor our children! More in next month's newsletter.

Spring

So, it's Spring again....that season of new beginnings. And yes, everywhere we look we see renewal, new life, new growth. Everything is greening up and budding out. There was a time for all of us when Spring was a season of hope, when problems seemed manageable and temporary or at least we believed that. Resolution seemed like possibility and we could say to ourselves "This, too, shall pass." And then came the day when we crossed that line from "Before" to "After" and nothing would ever be the same again. There is no resolution to losing a son or a daughter. Losing a sister or a brother is not manageable. Death is not temporary. This will not pass. All that passes is our understanding. All we can do is hope that time will smooth the piercing edges of our pain and grief. We can hope for fleeting moments of respite from the searing agony of our loss. In time, that elusive commodity, we can hope that we have more good memo-

ries that painful ones. We can begin to grow a tougher skin until the rawness of our wounds begins to heal. We can learn to endure and carry on for our surviving children and siblings. We can experience new joys and discover new appreciation for the old ones. We can know our hearts more fully and love more deeply. We can have gratitude and we can learn to hope again, to recognize the gifts we've been given in the people we love and cherish each moment, good or bad. We can remember our children and honor those memories in the works we do. Our children mattered.... to us and to the world. We can live our lives as if they were watching.....we know they are.

This pain, this loss, this insidious grief, will always be with us. This will not pass. But there is still joy and there are still new beginnings and there are still people to love. And there is still and always will be hope.

Peace, Brenda

Gratefully lifted from another Brenda who was the editor of the North Shore Chapter newsletter.

I Forgive...

I've heard advice for the bereaved that forgiveness is an important part of "healing." I've worked hard at that elusive forgiveness, and came to the realization today that I am actually able

(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 to members



April

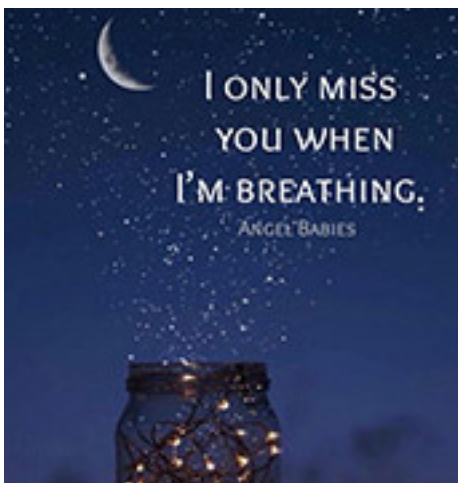
Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

to forgive quite a lot.

- I forgive myself for not forgiving the people that caused my daughter's death. Some things are just not "forgivable," and she would understand.
- I forgive others for sharing their "miracles" with me, not understanding how cruelly this attacks my heart, as I wonder where my daughter's miracle was.
- I forgive others for not understanding me. I don't understand anything anymore, so I can't expect others to understand me either.
- I forgive myself for not being able to do all of the things I used to be able to do. I don't function as well as I used to, and that's okay.
- I forgive others for continuing to live in that other world where I once lived with my daughter. It's a good world, and I miss it a lot.
- I forgive myself for no longer fitting into that world and not always being able to fake it. I am different now.
- I forgive others for avoiding me. They don't know what to say and, quite frankly, that leaves me with nothing to say to them either.
- I forgive my daughter for leaving me. She loved life and she loved me. I believe she loves me still. This is probably not what people mean when they say we need to "forgive," but it's the best I can do. It's enough that I can do anything at all, and maybe they will forgive me as well.

In memory of her daughter, Debbie is currently the editor of the TCF Central Valley, Tracy, California Chapter



That First Compassionate Friends Meeting

This article is for those of you who are working up the courage to attend your first TCF meeting. Recently, some people who came talked about the effect their first meeting had on them and why they continue to attend. One couple said they felt so drained and unsettled they could hardly sleep and just dragged through work the next day. Another, a teacher, said that after her first meeting, she made arrangements to have a substitute teacher for her class the day following the second meeting she was going to attend. She knew she wouldn't feel up to teaching after coming to TCF. One man said he got up on the Tuesday morning of the week TCF met dreading having to go. He dreaded it all day, naming to himself many good reasons why he couldn't be there. Then he said he always felt better after the meetings and was glad he had made himself go. These examples show why we say, "Try TCF two or three times before you give up on it."

You may be asking yourself why someone would willingly attend a meeting that had such a seemingly bad effect and apparently left them more upset than when they came. Psychologists say we need to talk, feel and act in order to resolve grief in a positive way, so the lasting effects are beneficial to our functioning well and to our eventual healing. To heal we must have the courage to face reality and to change.

People continue to come to TCF, even if their first meeting turned them off, because they sense these things and they see a group of people who are individually coping and struggling to make peace with one of the worst traumas they will ever encounter. Initially they may feel worse because for two hours they've dealt with their grief in a concentrated way. They haven't been able to avoid it, push it to one side, be distracted by other things or deny the death of their child. They've told their story; they've listened to other people

tell theirs; they've hurt for others, for themselves and for a world in which death has inverted the natural order of things. They've gotten a bucket load of grief all at once. No wonder they feel overwhelmed.

For many, the idea of group grieving is uncomfortable. They've treated their grief as personal (and it is), they've been self-centered (most grievers are), they've wrapped themselves in a cocoon of not being understood and feeling different from normal people, and they've bought society's myth that the repression of feelings is a sign of strength. Then here they are in a group of strangers who are spilling their guts. If they continue to attend, they may find "those people" aren't really strangers. They share a common bond. They, too, may have been uncomfortable at first, but as time went on, they found that a TCF meeting is the one place where it is safe to crawl out of that cocoon and talk about those unusual, crazy thoughts and actions that plague them.

Another thing that may bother people is that some TCF members actually laugh and socialize. Laughter is a great balm for tension and indicates that a certain amount of healing is taking place. People at TCF are in all stages of grief. Their laughter and socializing means they're making progress. It shows that all bereaved parents may one day want to laugh again, that grief will not be all encompassing.

Because you are so raw and vulnerable since your child died, certain meetings may anger you or hit your most tender spots. TCF does have off-nights when nothing comes over as intended, the speaker isn't on target, the sharing groups don't jell, the vibes are all wrong. Don't judge the possible benefits by one attendance. Consider, too that it might have been an off-night for you, or maybe you are attending too soon after your child's death and need to wait a while before coming back.

Time alone will not heal the wounds of the bereaved. It will distance you from the event, but it will not make you well. Acknowledging the death

and the possibility for positive change, actively working to resolve the upheaval caused by the death and finding new avenues and persons to invest in and love will produce healing. TCF attempts to help as you reshuffle your life and work through your pain.

Grief is hard work; that's what TCF is all about. If, after attending several meetings, you feel TCF isn't for you, stop coming. It truly isn't for everyone, but the group is there if you need them, whenever you need them.

Elizabeth B. Estes

Giving

We all have something to give, and it is through this act of giving and risking to love again, that we ultimately find a way to heal. Often we uncover sacred gifts of our own just by listening to others who are hurting, or by holding someone's hand and letting them know we care. Each of us has a story, and each of us feels alone with our heartache. Yet we are never truly alone when we let ourselves be unafraid to share our feelings, and to give what is in our hearts. Sharing connects us and makes us realize how much people need one another in this world.

I still look up into the night sky sometimes and think about those two little boys that were with me for such a short while. And sometimes I find myself wondering what they would be like today if they could have grown up with their brother and sister. Then I remember that although they are with the angels, in some wonderful way they are still with me — because love never dies. It is the strength we carry with us forever.

Flavia Weeden copyright Weedon Family Trust (Reprint permission granted to TCF)

Acceptance

Do we ever really accept the death of our child? After reading my journal, reading the newsletter articles, listening to others, I do not think so. Following the first year or two of shock, disbelief and intense pain I experience times when I really think of David's loss that I literally get sick to my stomach and my heart hurts. With all of these feelings I still have visions of David walking through the door and this nightmare is over. Sure, I found a day to day life, meeting my obligations, caring for my family and even having moments of laughter. I know on one level that David is no longer part of this life, but, to me, I still cannot accept it.

Lois Copeland, TCF, Arlington, VA

Awkward Silence

I wish that someone would say his name. I know my feelings they're trying to spare, and so we go through the charade, the game, of dancing around the ghost that is there, trying to avoid evoking a tear, or stirring emotions too painful to bear.

That he be forgotten is what I fear, That no one will even his presence miss, As if there's no trace that he was here. By referring to him, my purpose is Not to stir pity or keep things the same, But my heart will simply break

If his memory will die
Like a flickering flame.

I just wish someone would say his name.

*Richard Dew, M.D.
TCF, Knoxville, TN*

I'm Beginning to Know Your Children

I'm beginning to know your children. From the things I've heard you tell. From the pictures that you've brought here.

I think I know them well.

Our hurt and sorrow is immense. I'm not sure where to start. Compassion, after all, is Your pain in my heart.

My thanks to you for listening To words wrung from my soul. We are The Compassionate Friends And that's all I need to know.

Jack Bahm

TCF Louisville, KY

If Only, One More Time

To hear your voice loud and clear; to see your image as if you're here; to feel your warmth like you are near, if only, one more time. To hear you call, "Mom, I'm home," to keep me company when I'm alone; to watch you run and grab the phone, if only, one more time. To watch you sit quietly and read; to buy you things you say you need; to see you do a thoughtful deed, if only, one more time. To find a note written by you; to walk upstairs and trip over your shoe; to comfort you when you're feeling blue, if only, one more time. To feel your arms in a soft embrace; to see that smile upon your face; to understand when you needed space, if only, one more time.

Vicki Richey TCF,

Orange County Chapter, CA

You Are So Strong

"You are so strong"
Empty words
That don't touch the reality
That my life has become.
Walking through fog
Incredible pain

Searching for the beloved face
I crave to see
The voice that I strain to hear over the noises
Of people who have no idea
Of what the world has lost
*Charisse Smith,
TCF, Tyler, TX*

SIBS

The Worst Day of My Life

January 24th, 1994 was the worst day of my life.

I was sound asleep and at 10:30 in the morning the door bell rang. Two Missouri State Troopers stood at the door. My parents had already left for work, so I was concerned that they were in an accident. The troopers came in, used the phone to call my parents' bosses, then they handed me a wallet. The wallet belonged to my brother, Sean Anderson. I then asked the hardest question I have ever asked in my life, "Is Sean dead?" At that point, I felt like I was standing outside of myself, almost dreamlike.

The older trooper then said "Yes, he

is." I felt like then and still do now that the whole scene was in slow motion. The troopers quickly left. I can't remember much about the rest of that day or the days that followed.

I only remember bits and pieces about the funeral. I just know that the day Sean died, was the worst day of my life. The days that followed were full of activity and planning. My mom wanted the family to be involved, if we wanted to be. We wanted Sean to be remembered for his music and his zest for life. His friends became involved and did Sean's music for the service and many were pallbearers. That's a lot for a group of 19 year old young men to give.

I wish there was some way that I could thank them for all that they did for us.

Almost immediately after the funeral, my sister returned to her home about 4 1/2 hours away.

One important lesson I have learned throughout this whole ordeal is that everyone grieves differently.

My sister's way of dealing with Sean's death was to leave. I envied her in a way because she didn't have to deal with the sadness every day. Now I realize that she dealt with Sean's death, she just had to do it alone.

I am nowhere near over this. I probably never will be. The only thing I can do is to not take life for granted and understand what a precious gift life is. Each day is a new adventure on this roller coaster of grief. The only thing that we can do is to continue to get up each day and maybe try to share a smile. When people ask me how I am, I can honestly say I am okay. I don't feel that I will ever be able to say that I am great again, but who knows. I never thought I could say I was okay. Sure, I have good days and bad days.

Sometimes the bad ones outnumber the good ones, but I just have to believe that there is a good day out there with my name on it.

We are surviving siblings and we must try to survive the best way we can. I wish for you a smile and a happy memory

Traci Morlock

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

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 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, 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

Regular meeting: Thursday, March 2 at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *“Did you dread your first meeting? Do you remember how you reacted to it? Why do you keep coming?”*



THANK YOU to Cindy and Matt and Mary and Mike for all of their hard work. Also, thank you to everyone else who donated to our Fund Raiser for the work they all did. We appreciate it very much.

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.

- ♥ Vince & Sylvia Fregonara in memory of: **Michael Fregonara** “I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night” 8 Years Missed, Forever and Always Loved, Mom, Dad and Bradbury
 - ♥ Stefanie Porter in memory of: **Emmy**: In Memory of Emmy’s Birthday.
-

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.

Debbie Bugeja, whose beloved brother, **Steve York**, born 9/07; died 12/17

Pamela Harris, whose beloved, son, **Danny**, born 12/24/; died 01/21, 45 years

Frannie and Samantha Kish, whose beloved daughter, **Amanda**, born 5/3; died 10/22; 18 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

April 2023

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



April Craft Day

We will be making bracelets at our Craft day on Saturday April 29th at Kathy Rambo's house. The address is: 1476 Penniman Ave. Plymouth. The bracelet is made with beads, buttons, charms and special thread. The charge will be \$5.00. All supplies are provided but if you have charms, or buttons from your child's clothing please bring them as they truly add to your bracelet. There will be a sign up sheet and examples at the April meeting. Any questions please contact Kathy: Katjrambo@gmail.com or (734) 306-3930. You can text, or call.