

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**April 2022**  
**Volume 34, 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 7** - Monthly Chapter Meeting -  
see info on page 7  
**April 9** - Alan Pedersen - see more info  
on this page  
**April 19 - 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.  
**April 23 - CRAFT meeting - pg 8**  
**May 5 - Balloon Lift - Page 7**  
**May 14 - Bowling Fund Raiser -  
see page 7**



### **Healing Grief and Regrets Workshop - April 9**

Alan Pedersen is coming to our Livonia Chapter. He will be presenting a workshop on "Healing Guilt and Regrets".

This workshop will help participants gain an understanding into the guilt and regret bereaved parents may face in relation to both the life and the death of their child. Participants will be given effective tools to offer the bereaved to help them work through guilt and regret, including owning their guilt, accepting their guilt, sharing their guilt, and releasing their guilt. The 5 H's (hurt, hope, help, honor, and healing) will be shared in detail and practical examples given of each.

Alan will be at St Timothy's Church, located at 16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia Michigan, on April 9th from 10:00 AM to noon. There is no cost to come to

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

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

If you are interested please contact Kathy Rambo to make reservations. Call or text her at: (734) 306-3930 or E-mail: Katjrambo@gmail.com.

### **Around the Corner to Spring**

Heavy, gray clouds; wet, cold rain; winters in the Pacific Northwest can be long and lonely. The promise of spring is a faraway thought. But just as winter engulfs us now, spring is peeking around the corner. Daffodils will bravely break the hard ground, colorful

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# **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 members*



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

tulip cups will catch spring showers, and slowly but surely, trees will bud, birds will sing and the sun will shine.

We have all encountered unspeakable pain in the loss of our child, and the seasons of recovery may also seem overwhelmingly dark and cold. Through this tremendous trauma, each of us finds a way to survive—a strength many could not imagine, yet here we are. Each day, season, and year that we survive beyond that unforgettable day, I believe our children nurture the seeds of love they planted in our hearts; and it is this enduring love that helps us discover life again.

Spring is often known as the “season of hope”. Yes, there will still be spring showers (just as there will always be a tear for our loved ones), but they are often punctuated by breathtaking rainbows stretching across the heavens and the promise of blue skies once again. The air seems lighter and fresher, filled with floral aromas and the scent of ‘life’!

As we close out these last weeks of winter and look ahead to brighter days, my wish to all families is that you celebrate your strength, honor your tears, and share a word of hope and support to others who are newly bereaved.

May we all find spring in our hearts!

*D. Barta  
Portland, Oregon.*

## Learning To Live With Grief Brain

Losing my daughter has changed the way I think. I don’t just mean my perspective on life has changed, I mean the actual cognitive process of thinking.

I have grief brain. Grief brain is what happens to your exhausted mind after the loss of a loved one. I’m not sure how much scientific evidence there is to back it up, but I’ve read plenty of anecdotal accounts to know that it’s a thing.

For me, grief brain settled in after the stillbirth of my daughter.

At first, I thought my memory lapses

and my inattentiveness could be chalked up to the exhaustion of experiencing a stillbirth. It seemed normal that I would have a tricky time remembering when to take my medications and keep track of appointments. A complicated medical situation was new for me and I had also just delivered a baby.

Anyone in my situation would feel confused. But, as my physical condition improved, I noticed that the fog didn’t seem to be lifting from my brain. So, I figured it must be exhaustion. After three months, and plenty of sleep, I came to wonder if this was something more. This cloudy, scattered brain seemed to be a symptom of my grief.

*Rachel Whalen  
from Still Standing Magazine*

## A Bereaved Parent’s Battle Cry

This is a bereaved parent’s battle cry. I’m tired... tired of having to hide how I am truly feeling from the rest of the world.

Tired of having to put on a fake smile every time I go to work or a social event, so people around me will think I’m doing better.

Tired of wanting to post something about MY CHILD – yet I don’t because people are “tired of seeing that.” So I hide.

I hide and post in one of my bereaved parent groups because that is the only place “I feel safe enough to show my real feelings and won’t be judged.”

Why the hell should I have to hide my feelings about my child?

Do others have to hide their feelings about their children?

Do other parents have to watch “how many times” they post about their son or their daughter’s soccer games or recitals or first steps or proms or births – or anything that they rejoice in? Because other people will rejoice with them! They are not looking for pats on the back because they are that child’s parent. They are proud of their children. PERIOD!

So why...

WHY IS IT DIFFERENT FOR BEREAVED PARENTS?

We don’t have future proms... or recitals...

or births...

or first steps.

We have memories.

That is it!

We post about our children because... we are proud of them just like any other parent.

We want people to support our memories with the same encouragement with which they used to support our accomplishments and milestones when our children still lived!

Say our child’s name!

Share a memory to our page of that child!

Rejoice with us!

Please Don’t Forget About My Child!

And on those hard days when we post that we miss our child, and we say we can’t go on, whether it is two months or 10 years later –please understand, we are not looking for a pat on the back or sympathy.

We want you to remember that child with us!

Please...

Memories are all we have left...

I love you all...

Please understand that posting is healthy and therapeutic!

Each time you take the time to read our posts and comment, you are helping us on our healing journey!

Expressing ourselves is grief-work NOT pity-work!

It takes a lot of courage to be so vulnerable to express our deepest pain right here for everyone to see!

If we don’t express our grief we feel like we are going to explode!

Expressing ourselves is a way of letting the steam out of a pressure cooker!

Helping us cope a little better!

Helping to validate our journey!

Maybe even finding purpose in our pain!

When you remember our child, you help divide our pain!

*Anna Nalepka*

## Finding hope

It would be nice if grief was simple and straightforward. But it isn't. And that can sometimes make you feel quite hopeless. Literally, a loss of hope, that you will ever feel better or at peace. I think that loss of hope can be quite dangerous.

So how do we get through these times when we reside in 'Bleak House' and we cannot see any future? The main message of my articles on "The Way" has been about taking one step at a time, one step after the other. We don't always know where those steps will lead us. It doesn't usually do us much good to try to foresee how we will feel in the future. Let's focus on this moment. Let's just get through today.

Looking back at other times and how we survived them can also help. The fact is that we did survive. What helped on that occasion? Was it a call to a helpline? A chat with a friend? Trying to escape the moments by reading a book, going out to a film, some retail therapy? Was it a meaningful activity like a charity walk or a visit to someone who is in a worse state than ourselves? What worked in the past might not help today, but it might.

I would suggest that realizing that you are not alone in what you're experiencing can also be a great comfort. Talking with other people who are bereaved can help you realize that your roller-coaster of emotions is not unusual. Talking with other people can also help you realize that it can be survived.

Doing something in your loved one's memory can also be comforting. Organizing the photos. Creating a collage. And finally, I think it helps to give yourself something to look forward to, like making arrangements for a visit to a friend or a favorite place. What's that show that you've always wanted to see? What about the weekend pottery course? What about that walk? You might not feel like it now, but the focus on making the arrangements will be good to start with, and hopefully by the time the event comes around, you

will find you have something to enjoy. There is no magical destination where grief ends, but there are places on the journey that are not as difficult as others. When we're feeling hopeless, it's time to search them out.

*Anonymous*

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edging closer to, like a neighbor or a new friend, I'd tell the truth: I had a younger brother, and he died.

The harder, more painful question now is the internal one that pulses just beneath the surface. No one has asked me it; I doubt anyone will. It's deeper and more crushing.

Am I still a sister?

It's been nearly 22 years now since my brother died. He's been gone for longer than he was here. And while the brutal loss doesn't haunt me every moment like it did in those early months, it remains etched on my heart. It continues to evolve, just like our relationship would've. Should've.

A year and a half ago, when my dad was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and my mom and I sat at his bedside, I sometimes imagined a third chair with us, my brother filling it. In the loneliness of my dad's illness and death, I felt the stark pain of my missing brother rush over me again, the wide reminder of all the awful and beautiful thresholds he should've been here for.

Sometimes I wonder if acquaintances ever see my posts on social media and wonder why I'm still writing about my brother's death all these years later. Why I keep dredging it up, running my fingers through the silt. Maybe I'd

tell them it's because I can still summon up those metallic early months after Will died, the vast loneliness of searching for books to accompany me in my grief and finding more literature on pet loss than on sibling loss.

David Kessler, an expert in grief who worked with death and dying guru Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, has posited that there's an often overlooked sixth stage of grief — meaning making. My interpretation of this sixth stage is that by taking some of the love I have for Will and alchemizing it into words that might help other grieving siblings, my love for him has somewhere meaningful and tangible to go.

I often receive messages from people who are wading through the raw and murky days after a sibling has died. I'm always touched by these, always grateful. I usually say a little prayer for them, for the missing galaxy of their lost sister or brother, for all the future they feel robbed of.

And I also say a thank you — to my brother, to the universe, to some unseen power — for allowing me the opportunity to extend my hand, to peer back at all the milestones I've crossed and continue to cross without my brother. Because in these moments of quiet connection, in these slivers of mentorship? I still feel like a sister.

*Lynn Shattuck*

*Writer on sibling loss, grief*

I'm unreliable. I'm late. I'm disorganized.  
I'm weepy. I can't make decisions.  
I'm angry for reasons  
you cannot possibly understand.  
Neither can I.  
I'm lost. I'm not me anymore.  
The mirror is lying, and this cannot be my life...  
This is what grief looks like.  
Please, love me through it.

## SIBS

### Do You Have Siblings?

I don't feel the warm rush of panic flood my chest when I'm asked this question anymore, though I've never quite gotten used to it. As a middle-aged mom, I don't actually hear it as much anymore. When I'm getting to know someone new, our inquiries tend to center around kids or jobs or news.

So when someone asked me recently, I was caught off guard. We were at my mom's doctor appointment. My mind flitted around from the fire alarm that had delayed her appointment by a half hour to my mom's health to

the stubborn disbelief that I was sitting there instead of my dad, who died a year and a half ago. "Do you have any grandchildren?" the doctor asked my mother. My mom told him about my children. Then, before I could even see the question hurtling toward me, the doctor turned and asked me: "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

The question sat between us, ripe and waiting.

"No," I said. I shook my head, glanced at my feet.

For a moment, I wondered: If the doctor had asked my mom if she had other children, would she have answered the same? Or

would she have told the truth?

In the early years after my brother's death, the question haunted me. As a twentysomething at the time, I heard it often.

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

If I said, No, I don't have a brother, I felt like I wasn't honoring my younger brother, Will, who died at 21 from substance abuse. Saying no also felt inherently dishonest. It painted an untrue picture — I had not been raised as an only child. I'd been Will's sister since I was three; I could barely remember being unbrothered. But if I said, Yes, I had a brother, I'd have to also say that he died. Otherwise, they might ask where my brother lived, and if I answered, "In a box in my parent's liquor cabinet," things would get weird.

Dropping death into polite small talk almost always turns awkward. We don't learn how to speak about topics like death and grief and overdoses in school — we learn it either by being thrust into the bog of it or by having an unusually open and curious heart.

At some point, I decided on a loose rule for dealing with the inevitable question. If someone I was unlikely to have any type of consequential future relationship with — for instance, a hair stylist in a town I didn't live in — asked me if I had siblings, I'd say no and try to pivot the conversation to safer ground.

If it was someone I might be

### Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings Telephone Friends

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062

Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938

Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006

Marlene Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919

Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

Kathy Rambo - Sudden Death - (734) 306-3930

**Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.**

**TCF CHAT ROOM:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](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:** 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Phone: 877-969-0010; 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, 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, April 7 at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *Have you ever felt hopeless and how did you cope?*

**From your leadership:** Our April Chapter meeting will be held inside the church, unless we hear different due to covid concerns. Please check our Livonia Facebook page for any updates.

**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.

- ♥ J Stefanie Porter in memory of Emerson Nesi. "Happy Sweet 16 Beautiful Angel!"
- ♥ Craig & Donna Storie in memory of Our Son, Don. "We love and miss you everyday. Love, Mom & Dad"
- ♥ Joyce & Rob Gradinscak in memory of Our Son, Adam. "Adam, 17 years without you. Missing you always. Love, Mom & Dad"

## Let Us Celebrate Their Births



### The Compassionate Friends

#### 13th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, May 14, 2022 at 1:00 pm  
(Registration will begin at 12:15 pm)

Vision Lanes  
38250 Ford Rd  
Westland, MI 48185  
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

Please let us know if you will be joining us so we can reserve lanes  
Cindy Stevens @ 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 & pop)  
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes

Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)  
Mail to: Mary Hartnett 5704 Drexel St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

**OPEN TO PUBLIC**

### SAVE THE DATE!

May 5:

#### Annual Balloon Lift

Come to our meeting with family and friends to launch a balloon in memory of your child(ren). More details to come in the May newsletter!



Our Livonia chapter is making a new name list of our children, grandchildren and siblings that will be read at the Candle Lighting ceremony held in Kellogg Park each December.

This list has become too large to read with over 1000 names since it has not been updated in several years. Even if your names have been on the list for years, this is a brand new list and you will need to contact us by either email or phone, if you want to be included. If you would like your child, grandchild or sibling name read this year (2022) at the Candle Lighting, please email your name, your phone # and the name you want read to: [stevenscd57@gmail.com](mailto:stevenscd57@gmail.com) or you may call our TCF number 734-778-0800 with the name/s. Please submit your names by September 30th, 2022.

Thank you all for understanding.

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

**April 2022**

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 Chapter Craft Day**

Our craft day will be on Saturday April 23, at the Plymouth District Library, 223 S Main St, Plymouth from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. We will be decorating frames. All supplies will be provided. There will be a sign up sheet and examples at the April meeting. If you have any questions please contact Kathy Rambo: (734) 306-3930 you can text /call or e-mail me at: [Katjrambo@gmail.com](mailto:Katjrambo@gmail.com)