

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**August 2022**  
**Volume 34, Number 8**

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:

**August 4** - Monthly Chapter Meeting  
see page 7

*No craft meeting this month*

**August 16- 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.

**August 6-7** - TCF National Conference,  
Houson, Texas

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>



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.  
We Need Not Walk Alone, We Are the  
Compassionate Friends.

### Communicating with My Child

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.

*(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 members*



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

Sometimes I feel his arms around me in compassionate 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 Chapters, CA*

## Companion Sojourners

The dictionary defines the word “sojourn” as temporary place where one may stop, rest, visit, dwell, abide and lodge.

The Compassionate Friends is an organization of fellow sojourners. At our monthly meetings we stop for a while to find respite from a world that does not understand what it means to lose a child. We find a safe dwelling where there are others who are just like us. We don't need to have any special skills to be a sojourner. As

bereaved parents, we instinctively reach out to one another. Those of us who have been on our journey for a while are drawn to comfort the others who have more recently embarked on their path of grief. We don't need to say any special words. A discerning look, a listening ear, or a gentle touch can be balm the other person needs to give them a moment's solace. We are companion sojourners, wounded healers and compassionate friends.

*Janet Reyes*

*TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX*

## The Wake-up Call: Her Best Friend's Wedding

The bride (my daughter's best friend) was radiant; the groom nervous but excited; the flower girl and ring bearer adorable; the parents' shedding joyful tears; the weather near perfect... by all appearances, it looked like the ideal wedding; all was progressing smoothly, things were coming together as planned.

Not a thing looked out of place... to most everyone present; that is, to everyone but me, the mother of a forever 15-year-old brunette with a dazzling, braces-laden smile. I tried desperately to hide my quivering lip, ignore the lump in my throat and knot in my stomach, yet lost that battle to choking sobs and a flood of tears that streamed down my face relentlessly. I watched the bridesmaids as they proceeded down the aisle, longing to see the face of my daughter, Nina, who should have been physically present, if her life were not cut short by a drunk driver. Instead, she was relegated to a small mention at the back of the program along with the couple's grandparents: “Here with us in spirit...”

I weathered the reception until it came time for the wedding party to take to the dance floor. They all had a particular dance and a song that apparently was their group of friend's “special thing”. They participated in this dance and song with obvious delight.

As I watched, I realized that this was something Nina, who had died eight years earlier, had never been a part of – it was as if a hand had reached down and plucked her out of the loop. At that very moment I have never felt so profoundly Nina's nonexistence in the lives of her high school friends.

The few years following Nina's death, her friends (while they were still high-school students) were still closely connected to her. However, since then they have graduated from college, now many have married or are on the career track. Some even have children of their own. A lot of time and distance and events had taken place in that time frame. And all of it without Nina's physical presence; to them now a distant memory. After a night of insomnia and much self-analysis, I came to some conclusions that I hope will help those of you who may find yourself in a similar situation someday.

The wedding really became a wake-up call for me; a lot of realizations became clear. Though other bereaved parents seemed to understand that this would be the outcome and had forewarned me, I was blind to it. They seemed to grasp the inevitable; that though Nina was paramount in my thoughts, no one else could possibly be able to think of her with the same magnitude as I did. In my desperation that she not be forgotten, I seemed to delude myself into believing that should be the case for everyone.

For bereaved parents, one of our greatest fears is that our children will be forgotten. But after this wedding and the opinions voiced by others who know, I think this needs to be amended. That though we, as their parents, remember our children in much more visible and personal ways, (such as memorial gardens, scholarships, remembrance services, balloon releases, photo buttons and pictures here, there and everywhere, and speak of them freely, with laughter and tears), that others may do their remembering in much more subtle and private ways. That though we do not always see it

outwardly, as we might prefer, they remember internally, by carrying our loved ones' memory more quietly in their hearts.

Life marches on. We are glad (and maybe even a little envious) that our children's friends are happy in love or successful and would want nothing else for them. But when all is said and done, even with our most valiant efforts at managing the milestones that our children may not have been able to experience, like graduations, marriages, grandchildren, and more--all of those major happenings we will never experience with our children--no matter the amount of time that goes by, their absence hurts. We love them and always will. How could it not be painful?

I don't write this to sadden anyone; I tell you of my experience so that if this happens to you somewhere in your grief journey you might be able to see it in a different light. I know that I will try to remember this when I don't hear from her friends for a long time (or maybe not at all).

But when I go to her grave site and see a bouquet of her favorite flowers (daisies) I know were left by her best friend, or a note written in the journal I leave there written by a classmate that I never even met, that they haven't forgotten; that Nina had an impact on their lives and that they continue to and always will remember...but in their own way.

*With gentle thoughts,  
Cathy Seehuetter TCF St. Paul, MN*

Suggestions from the St. Paul editor on Attending Weddings (Or Not) When You Are Bereaved

Plan an "escape route". Sit where you can get out of the church or reception without too much fuss. If you can, sit in the back row close to the exit of the sanctuary. Do this so that if you find that you just can't sit there for even one more minute without fleeing and/or screaming, you have a way to leave as easily as you can.

Use the "5 Minute Rule". Tell your-

self that you will not make a decision about whether to go to the event or not until 5 minutes before it is time to leave. That however you feel at that specified time frame will determine if you feel you are able to or not handle being at the wedding or reception. You can even put that on the RSVP. Hopefully, they will be okay with that but, if not, please be good to yourself and stick with what you feel will be best for you. A true friend will understand. And only you know what is best for you.

\*\*\*The above suggestions can be used for more than just weddings, but for other happenings like graduations, holiday celebrations, or any event that may be difficult to be present at since your child, grandchild, or sibling died.

## You Are Braver

You are braver than you will ever know. You may not realize it but you are valiant, magnificent and strong in spirit. You are courageous. You have endured and somehow survived the most horrific injury that anyone in this life can suffer. Your child has died. But somehow you have miraculously found the strength to still breathe in and out. And after a while, you managed to put one foot in front of the other and have tried to the best of your ability to adapt to a strange new world; one that exists without your precious child in it. A world you must step out in to and face every day without any outward signs that you are altered for life.

If you were to wear your most grievous wound displayed on the outside of your body like permanent stigmata, would people recoil from the sight or would they perhaps offer compassion and understanding for your piteous condition? That's why you are so brave. Although no one else can see how horribly injured you are, you are still doing your best to function and participate in this life. I want to challenge you to be brave just once more. If you have not been to a Compassionate Friends meeting,

please muster all of the strength and courage you have and walk in the door for that first meeting. We'll help you from there. We care. We understand. We too have the same wounds as you. We need not walk alone.

*Janet G. Reyes  
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX*

## My Daughter

"Never were you more precious to me, nor have I ever loved you more than I do now." These were the words I spoke to my daughter upon seeing her for the first time following the loss of her five-month-old daughter, my granddaughter. My love for her was so intensified that it actually hurt. Filled with my love for her, but at the same time helpless, angry and torn to pieces, I knew that no amount of ointment, bandages, etc., would ever be able to heal this wound.

Anger, a terrible anger that this was allowed to happen. A daughter, a beautiful kind person who wanted a baby so very much and couldn't understand why it was being denied her. After five long years of trying and praying, it happens, and a little girl is born. Now she has something of her own, something that is part of her. Something to cherish and to lavish all the motherly love that she has in her to give. Five years of trying, five months of having, then nothing but emptiness. An empty heart, and empty arms.

A child is hurt and Mother is there to bandage the wound and wipe away the tears. Now this grown-up child stands before you wounded, and you are helpless, knowing there isn't a bandage big enough to wrap a torn and bleeding heart in. You wipe away the tears, but they keep coming and mingle with your own. Her hurt is your hurt, and you know that there will always be tears in her life. You know because you have also lost a child.

*(continued on page 7)*

# SIBS

## “Don’t Cry Because Its Over... Smile Because It Happened”

I cry when I think about how much I miss my brother!

I cry when I long to hear his voice or see him come around a corner.

I cry when I think about all the times we won’t be sharing together anymore--holidays, birthdays, family times.

I cry when I think about the wonderful person he was, and how many more incredible things he could have ac-

complished, if he was still here.

I cry when I think of why he had to go so soon, and what I could have done to help him stay with us a little longer.

I cry when I think of his pain, and I think of why it had to happen to someone so undeserving of it.

I cry when I think about my own two children, and the uncle they will never get to truly know, and the fun times they will never get to have together.

I cry when I think of all the people who will never get to meet my brother, and who will never get to experience his warmth and caring.

I cry when I think of the family of his own, that my brother will never get to have.

I cry when I think of the pain and hurt I see in my parents, as they endure the suffering caused from losing a child.

I cry when I think of the pain my sister and I share, as we work through the loss of our little brother.

I smile when I think of the thirty years of great times we had together.

I smile when I think of how happy we were to get a little brother.

I smile when I think of how much he was spoiled by us, as the baby of the family.

I smile when I think of how much I respected him, as he grew up to become an outstanding young man, Marine and Police Officer.

I smile when I think of his humor, outgoing personality, and awesome smile.

I smile when I think of our last few times together and the talks we had, and the support he was there to lend.

I smile when I think of all the all-too-few good years my children got to spend with their uncle Denny.

I smile when I think of all the people he touched, and the lives he made such a difference in.

I smile when I think of how proud my family has always been of my brother.

I smile when I think of how loved my brother is, and always will be, no matter where he is.

I smile when I think about how lucky I am to have gotten to have someone like my brother in my life, no matter how far-too-short our time was together.

I smile when I think of him watching over me, and being with me, wherever

I go, in my heart, where he will never be forgotten.

“Don’t cry because it’s over... Smile because it happened.”

*Kelly Mallory Herrmann*

*From This Healing Journey*

*An Anthology for Bereaved Siblings*



### 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 Thursday7-9; 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, June 2nd at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *“Do you communicate with your child(ren)? If so, do you have a special place or time? How does it make you feel?”*

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**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

- ♥ Sandra Weisl in loving memory of Scott
  - ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens in memory of Justin; “Sending our love always to our son Justin. Always in our hearts!”
  - ♥ Ken & Eve Ventura in memory of Kristin; “In Memory of Kristin Eve”
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## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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*continued from page 5*

You hold her in your arms, but the Mother in you wants to take her back into your body so she will be safe and protected. You don't want her grown up. You want your little girl back so you can hold her, rock her, and keep her warm and happy. You are helpless, you can't go back.

Two little girls, a daughter, and granddaughter. A little granddaughter that we only had for five short months to enjoy. Too young to be taken from her Mother. A daughter to have to carry such a terrible sorrow the rest of her life. A daughter that a part of me now has back as a little girl again, but only in my heart. I can't protect her from the sorrows in this life, but I can put my arms around her, kiss her and say, “Mother loves you. You are special.”

*Vera Babb,*

*TCF, St. Louis, MO*

*Vera has lost both a son and a granddaughter.*

## I Am A Man

I hunt, fish, camp, drive a fast car, play football, basketball, and baseball. I am tough! I went to war. I am the toughest, two legged mammal alive. I am a MAN!

While our son was still in the hospital, I cried alone so my wife wouldn't see me. At home I cried alone, in the shower, in the back yard, anywhere but in front of my wife. I had to be a rock.

After our son died, I helped support my wife in the best way I knew how. I was a rock for her to lean on. I was invincible. The rock caused more trouble than good. Soon, we were not talking or getting along with each other, and I didn't understand why. My wife became angry. She told me, “You act like you don't love J.J.” (Because I didn't appear to be grieving).

The rock became mush. I then realized what I had done. I had played MAN instead of just being a father and a husband. You see, a mother doesn't need a rock with no emotions. She needed me to show her I did indeed love our son and that I was hurting after his death, and that I did cry.

My wife comforted me that night, after we talked. I cried, and she cried. We both needed it. I found out that it was good for me to cry and let my wife help me. I am a man. I am a grieving man, who now does not mind crying in front of anyone. I cry for myself and for our son, J.J.

*Jim Brown,*

*Grief Relief Magazine*

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

## ***August 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

