

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**August 2025**  
**Volume 37, 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 7 -7:00 pm - Meeting:**  
*see page 7*

**August 19th, 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

***\*\* 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***

### **Shock and Awe and More**

Shock and awe recently refers to the unexpected and unanticipated military offensive by one nation against another, rendering the target devastated materially and morally. The leadership, the military, the population, clueless that disaster was hurtling toward them. Stunned and disbelieving, they cannot process, yet rationally respond to the trauma. This immobility and loss of mooring is the phenomenon labeled shock and awe. Shock that the unfathomable has become the undeniable. Awe toward the forces that have vanquished them. Stripped of their sense of control and powerless over the horrifying outcome, the victims seem paralyzed to address immediate concerns and to plan for the future as they are forced to choose a course of action in which none of the alternatives are deemed acceptable.

While shock and awe usually refers to a political initiative, the death of a child can be understood as a personal attack of shock and awe. Nothing prepares a parent for this loss. In the case of death caused by accident, violent crime, heart attack or other sudden, fatal medical ailment, the shock is obvious. But even with the passing over a prolonged chronic illness, when the end does finally arrive, it still feels as if a rogue bomb, planted by a cruel, cold adversary, has exploded killing an innocent bystander. If a son or daughter

fails to win the battle against addiction or succumbs to suicide, the bereaved parents are utterly surprised that the right therapy, medication, treatment to bring about recovery and mental stability was not discovered before it was too late. And after that unquantifiable, unknowable while, when shock no longer guards them against the inevitable truth, they are filled with awe that it could be possible that their child is gone and they are still present, adrift in a world that has become alien and incomprehensible.

During the first days, weeks, months after my son died, it felt like I was having an out of body experience. My mind's eye seemed disconnected to the physical being that waked and worked, slept and ate, and behaved almost like a normal person. Who was that stranger wearing my face?

When our child dies, part of us dies too, and our core identity is diminished. We are vulnerable and incomplete, always missing our loved one. Yet we are greater than the sum of our grief, sadness and loneliness. As we learn to accept life on life's terms, we realize we are capable of resilience and courage we never thought possible. We strive, despite the challenge, to affirm the preciousness and sanctity of life, honor the gift that we were given during the years spent with our child, and continue to be a parent of a beloved

*(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*



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

son or daughter whose memory is a blessing.

We embody the paradox that we are both lesser and larger than we once were, and bravely stand in the truth of whom we are now – mothers and fathers who endure – shock and awe and more.

*Nora Yood*

## The Butterflies are Here!

Many of us at TCF hold the butterfly with utmost regard, for it is a symbol of our child's life and death. We think of our children being born into a free and more beautiful existence after the drudgery of a caterpillar's life here on earth.

But what about us? Does the butterfly hold an even deeper meaning for bereaved parents? It seems in fact we have also died. We are never the same after the death of our child. But can we be transformed into a beautiful creature, or are we doomed to be trapped in the web of a cocoon forever? I believe it is simply a matter of choice. We can stay in the silken threads which we have spun for ourselves. It's quite safe there. Perhaps if we isolate ourselves with a really tough cocoon, no one can ever reach in far enough to hurt us again.

But if we take a chance on emerging into a new person, the light of our children's love will have a chance to shine through our newly formed wings. It won't be easy. The grief cocoon holds anger, fear, guilt and despair. But we must work through it. In fact, there's no going around it. All butterflies must work their way through an ugly cocoon.

The butterflies are here. Won't you join them?

## Summer Butterflies

It is the first day of August, a typically warm and sunny, summer day in the suburbs of Cincinnati. It is also a little past the eighth anniversary of my son's death from a skateboard fall. These days, when few people (other than my TCF friends) remember my child's 13 years of life, I am frequently reminded of him by magnificent

colorful butterflies, soaring everywhere ... in Alaska where our family recently visited, butterflies along the river where we relaxed on weekends, butterflies around our home where he once frolicked. They are everywhere but never have I seen a butterfly in the pharmacy where my prescriptions are filled! Except today.

As bereaved parents, we often seek comfort in something that reassures us that our children are okay and are at peace where they are. My comfort comes from butterflies. The TCF butterfly symbolizes the emergence of our children from life here on earth to a beautiful new freedom; to soar and swoop like the butterfly, to flit its magnificent wings at will, to lend grace and purity to its surroundings for everyone to admire and receive comfort. I frequently mention to the newly bereaved that there may be a message of love for them in the butterflies they see around them. I encourage them to look at the ones that fly nearby.

Today, standing alone in that pharmacy, I was stunned and overcome with joy as I watched that beautiful creature flit and soar, glide, and swoop over my shoulder. I embraced the message as my very own. My son is okay and happy where he is ... and I am comforted and at peace where I am. "Thanks Kevin! I love you, too."

## Butterflies and Visions

The daughter of a friend of mine was killed in an auto crash a short time ago. In one of our telephone conversations she hesitantly told me that her surviving son had a "vision" of his sister. I could tell the way she was telling the story that she wasn't sure just how I would react. She told me her son is an intelligent and stable person and wouldn't make up something like this. I could almost hear the relief in her voice when I told her that his experience is not an unusual one, a large number of grieving people report similar experiences.

Actually, nearly half of the grieving population have a sensory experience that involves their deceased loved

one. Griefers report seeing, hearing, or strongly feeling their loved one's presence. Others report an event or occurrence that assures them that their loved one is safe and happy.

Various theories attempt to explain this phenomenon, but none are conclusive. For those of us who have had these experiences, the only important conclusion we need is that the experience was very real and very meaningful to us. You may be able to explain the presence of a purple butterfly over the grave of my three year old granddaughter on a sunny afternoon, but for me it was a message from Emily saying: "Grandma, I'm okay.." Coincidence might explain it, but it was certainly significant for me, considering that purple is a color I wear often and the butterflies are one of my favorite things.

These experiences may be hallucinations or coincidences, but nonetheless, a lot of us are having them. Personally, I'm glad of it.

*Margaret Gerner,  
TCF, St. Louis, MO*

## Birthday Message

They say that time heals all things. We wonder if that is true. It has been 12 years and yet we know there's still days our tears still fall and our heart still aches.

We find small bits of comfort in daily thoughts of you Kassey. Memories that make moments we will never forget. At times, a bit less sad, and then there are the times, when we're sure we can smell your scent or hear your whispers through an earthly message, and then our hearts rejoice. Messages of hope come on the wings of a butterfly and on days when we feel we need help to cope.

There is a whisper in the wind saying it will be ok, so come what it may. We always know that you are with us. Watching over each and everyone of us. For one day we will all be together.

So we will wait for a message of hope on the wings of a butterfly. Or

even just a whisper in the wind saying it will be okay.

We love and miss you so much  
Kassey.

*Mom*

*Robin Jenerou*

## GOOD OLD

### SUMMERTIME???????

The good old summertime has arrived. The time when we usually plan vacations, family reunions, picnics, etc. There are many activities going on, such as ball games, golf, swimming, though for some of us a float trip on an Ozark stream is more enticing. Vacation Bible Schools and ice cream socials are held at churches. We usually adopt a more casual lifestyle, cook out-doors, and free ourselves of rigid schedules. Whatever our interests may be, this is the time for family togetherness. When our family is still intact it can be a wonderful time. If not, it can be a very painful time.

If this is the first summer following the death of your child, you may not have much inclination or energy for the usual activities, although many parents find that doing something physically demanding helps release the tension and anger associated with grief. Some have found a measure of healing and peace working in their yard or garden, or planting a flower garden in memory of their child. Others may feel obligated to attend family activities, and then they find that it does help to get involved.

If you don't feel able to get out and get involved in your usual activities, don't be concerned, just do what you feel like you can do now. Most of us think going away on a vacation or short trip somewhere will help us get away from the painful reminders of our child's death, and though it may be less painful than it was at home, we soon learn that we take our memories and emotions with us wherever we go. However, a vacation can be an incentive for doing something relaxing and enjoyable, though most of us feel guilty if we enjoy ourselves very soon after our child has died.

When we made vacation plans for the summer following our son's death in February, I was a little apprehensive. We were going to visit our daughter, who had recently moved to Michigan, and invited our daughter-in-law (our son's widow) and her daughters, ages three and five, to accompany us on the vacation. From there, all our group traveled upstate to stay a few days at a lake resort. Our little granddaughters kept the trip upbeat and lively, and we were able to enjoy ourselves for the first time that summer. It was helpful for all of us, even though there were several intense emotional moments. Now we realize that everyone in our family was still grieving, each in their own way, and it would have been helpful to have allowed each one some private time to rest every day.

As newly bereaved parents, we are like pioneers, charting our way through an unknown area to our new destination. We've been told that it is peaceful there, but we can't feel that peace until we arrive. Those who have already made the trip report that life is different, yet good, in that new place. But we find that difficult to believe, because we are still traveling that long, rugged trail, and the end is not yet in sight. "Don't be afraid," we are told, "we made it, and you will make it too. Just take your time, and you will find your way." Those who have made the journey encourage us to believe that we'll make it through the wilderness of grief and find peace.

As one who has found peace at the end of the journey, I'm thankful to those who encouraged me during those dark days when I could not see the way. Their loving support, and my faith, gave me hope that life could be good and meaningful again, and now it truly is.

If you are still struggling along, unable to see a future without pain and confusion, please reach out to those of us who have been there. We are here to take your hand and help you find the way to healing. Be kind to yourself and others, and take time to relax

and remember. Your child would want you to try to find some ways to enjoy life once again, without feeling guilty. This summer you may find the road to renewed hope and recovery.

*Lenora Sanders*

## Do You have Children

There have been many adjustments we have had to make after having lost our only child. Some of these have hit us immediately while others have snuck up on us in unexpected ways. One of the most difficult adjustments for us was trying to answer the question "Do you have children"? That question always seems to crop up in conversations with people we have just met, and every time it brings a prick to our hearts and, at least in the early days, some confusion as to how to answer it. Sometimes it throws us into a fit of tears. At other times, it may cause us to hastily mutter "no" to protect our too tender hearts and avoid talking about our grief with complete strangers.

Through the years we have answered the question in a variety of ways. We've always felt a pang of guilt at denying our child when we've said "no", even though at the time it seemed the most prudent answer for the circumstance. It was a quick, though certainly not painless way to move the conversation on to other things and not have to go into detail about our loss. While we were still trying to figure out how to live with our grief, the "no" answer was the easiest escape for us and caused the least discomfort for others.

Now that we are seasoned grievers, we no longer use that answer. We have always loved talking about our son Matthew and have determined that if that makes the people around us uncomfortable, it is more a problem for them than for us. Even though answering "yes but our child died", can be an absolute conversation stopper, we have learned to move beyond the discomfort and/or embarrassment (the most typical reactions) of the questioner, by  
enthusiasti-

(continued on page 7)



# SIBS

## Life Goes On

"Life goes on." I have often heard this sentence, said perhaps to console me, or perhaps as a way to put an end to conversation about loss and death. Of course life goes on, no matter how shattered our lives are by the loss of someone we love so dearly. Life doesn't ask whether we want to go along. We want the world to stop turning because of our loss. Days turn into nights, again and again, and this is how we arrived at this day. Suddenly another month, another year has gone by, although we all probably asked ourselves how we would be able to go on living. It just happens. We do not die because of the pain. We keep on living and I still wonder how this can be.

I do not want life to go on, but to

stop it right here, or better yet, to turn back to the day when I lost my sister and baby niece. I do not want the changes life brings. Each change seems to increase the distance between the life I knew with them and the life I live today. I cannot ask my sister's opinion about the new things that happen. I cannot share them with her, tell her about them, laugh or cry with her about them. Changes make me aware that in fact life does go on, without her. My birthdays make me sad because they change the difference in age... my sister was always four years older than I was.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I live on. I smell, I breathe, touch, feel, see and experience life, while my sister and her daughter were ripped away from it.

My sister and I never talked about death or losing each other, but if we

had, I am sure we both would have said that we could not imagine life without one another. If it had been me, my sister would have been forced to do exactly the same; go on living despite the agony, just because there is no choice.

Before I lost them, I trusted life to be good. I believed in fairness; if we are good, life will spare us tragedies and besides, these tragedies only happen to other people, those I do not know, those I read about in the papers, distant, easy to forget about. I lost this sense of security and trust in life. I now find that living takes courage. Life becomes meaningful through love and friendship, but loving is what makes us vulnerable. Daring to invite love into our lives means to increase vulnerability to the threats that seem to be around every corner. Instead of asking "why us?" I often find myself asking "why not us?" Tragedy hits good and bad people for no reason. It seems the world is just random and unpredictable. Just because I am a good person and I already lost so much does not mean I will be spared more pain.

Life goes on and because it does, with all the good and bad things that happen to us, it scares me to live and particularly to love. What if more happens? The fear is paralyzing. I pray to God, to my sister and my niece to protect us, although I know they don't have the power to prevent other things from happening. What then can I ask them for? Courage I guess.

Courage to let life go on, to give myself a chance that new and good things will happen to me that will add JOY to my life

Britta Nielsen,  
TCF Manhattan

## 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 Vitols - 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](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



## PLEASE REMEMBER

Sibings 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, August 7th. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: In the article, the woman says what she says to people who ask about her having children. What is your response to that question?

**\*\*\*\* 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](mailto:brendabrummel@me.com)**

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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 to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form is on back page.

♥ Robert and Joyce Gradinscak in loving memory of **Adam**: “Happy 45th Heavenly B-Day Adam. Love and Miss you always. Love Mom & Dad “

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## 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.*

Jessica & Jason Maldonado, whose beloved daughter, **Alexis Misenar**, born 6/6; died 6/2; 20 years

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## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

cally answering “Yes” and moving on to explain that our son has been living in heaven for seventeen years, to thank the person for asking because we love to talk about him. Unfortunately this too can sometime (but not always) be a conversation stopper. However, it seems to cause the least amount of embarrassment or awkwardness while giving us the wonderful opportunity to tell others about our son.

In every situation in which the question “Do you have children?” is asked, one must quickly analyze the response. Sometimes a brief “Yes, our son now lives in heaven”, is answer enough, and the conversation can move on to other topics. This is especially true if the people we are meeting are ones we don’t expect to meet again. If, however, they are people we will associate with again and again

over time, we talk about our son – always remembering to thank them for asking. Our own comfort and joy in talking about Matthew sometimes even transfers over to them as well.

If we are in a business situation or one in which ongoing conversation would not be possible, we merely answer “none still living” and let it go at that. In this way we have honored Matthew’s life without causing too much discomfort to others or spending time in lengthy explanation.

Ultimately, every person must decide for themselves how to answer the question, but I do believe that thinking and planning in advance will give the bereaved parent the most comfort when the question arises. Being prepared is often the difference between the awkwardness and additional hurt that might arise and the ongoing flow of conversation that allow you to move

on at your own comfort level.

*Penny Young*

*~written in remembrance of  
Matthew Ragan Young, 1975-1994*

“ the most  
beautiful people  
we have known  
are those who have  
known defeat,  
known suffering,  
known struggle,  
known loss,  
and have found their way  
out of the depths.

These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity,  
and an understanding of life,  
that fills them with compassion, gentleness,  
and a deep loving concern.  
Beautiful people do not just happen.”  
~ Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

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

***August 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

***And Yet This Happened  
To Me***

I took motherhood so seriously  
I took nothing for granted  
I was always thankful  
for what I had.  
And yet, this happened to me.  
I chose to stay with them,  
live through their lives closely,  
put my own aspirations  
on hold 'til they'd grown.  
And yet, this happened to me.  
My life was spent caring  
for two lovely daughters  
who made my life special  
in so many ways.  
One day she was living,  
alive, well and thriving.  
The next she was gone  
to a life we can't share.  
I'm learning to struggle  
to find ways of being  
that brings wholeness and peace,  
and live with what happened to me.  
*Genesse Gentry,*