

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



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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 1st -7:00 pm - see page 7

*August 20th at 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner
at: Grand 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 this month

REMINDER

**We will resume our normal meeting
schedule. We will meet Thursday,
August 1st.**

Summer Butterflies

It is the first day of August, a typical 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.

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



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

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

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 outdoors, 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

Memorial of a Brief Life

For eight months he grew inside me.
His heart beat; his legs kicked; His
arms moved.

Then one day it stopped.

Hardly a human lifespan,

Yet an eon of remembered fact:

Of anticipation.

Of what our baby would be like.

Of a crib filled with love and
happiness.

Of a tiny baby we would carefully
watch grow.

For eight months he grew inside me.

Long enough to have memory
forever remind me that I never saw
him,

Never held him, never felt his softness,
 Never counted his toes,
 Never knew the color of his eyes.
 Long enough to tell me and retell me of the
 Death-paled hands not quite covered by the gown he never got to wear home;
 Of all the stuffed animals he never got to cuddle; of a small casket;
 The smell of moist earth, and tears.
 In my hand I hold an obituary,
 A statistical report,
 A map to the cemetery lot where he was buried.
 A picture of his casket ...
 Souvenirs.
 We are all sorry,
 We know how you feel, they say..
 Thanks, but you can't know,
 For I don't feel ... not yet.
 It all went so fast-love-anticipation
 Where has it all gone?

Mary Eggeil,
 TCF, Central Coast Chapter, CA

Laughter

Can you think of anyone that deserves happiness more than bereaved parent? I can't! Yet, after your child dies, you find yourself feeling guilty when you laugh or are diverted for a moment from your pain. It's as though there's an unwritten rule that says a parent's depth of grief and love will be measured in direct proportion to the lack of joy and the inability to take pleasure in any part of life again. Laughter is as important to your recovery as tears. It is as vital as the bee to blossom. It provides a balance that you need in your life right now. Many people have survived by finding something funny and thus relieving and releasing some of the stress involved when coping with life's tragedies. If you are able to find something you can laugh about, do it! It doesn't mean you don't love, care, or miss, nor that you have forgotten. It just means you know

not to judge your depth of feeling by whether or not you can smile. Grief changes as we go along and it is okay to let go of some of the symptoms of early grief when you are able. To do so in no way insults the memory of your child. Some are afraid to let go of anything for fear they will forget. It is important for you to know that option is not available to you. You will always remember your child. The fact that he or she lived and died is a part of who and what you have been, are, and will be. Most try to be good to themselves by eating the right foods and exercising, with the hope that the end result will be trim bodies and unlined faces. Those things are well and good, but it turns out that the kindest thing you can do for yourself is to develop some lines on your face-laugh lines-for as someone once said, "He who laughs, lasts," and he also survives in a better way.

Missing You

I just can't believe it...
 The sun still rises and sets,
 The moon and stars still shine,
 The flowers still bloom,
 The birds still sing.
 I expected a change in everything
 I just can't believe it...
 It still gets dark and light,
 The ocean still has waves,
 The rain still rains,
 The wind still blows,
 Is it because they do not know?
 I just can't believe it...
 I thought the world would stop
 When in my house I found
 an empty chair, a missing smile
 I thought it would stop
 For just a while.
 I just can't believe it...
 Gretta Viney
 TCF Yakima, WA

The Gap

The gap between those of us who have lost children and those who have not is profoundly difficult to bridge. No one, whose children are

well and intact, can be expected to understand what parents who have lost children have absorbed and what they bear. Our children come to us through every blade of grass, every crack in the sidewalk, every bowl of breakfast cereal. We seek contact with their atoms, their hairbrush, their toothbrush, their clothing. We reach for what was integrally woven into the fabric of our lives, now torn and shredded.

A black hole has been blown through our souls and, indeed, it often does not allow the light to escape. It is a difficult place. For us to enter there is to be cut deeply, and torn anew, each time we go there, by the jagged edges of our loss. Yet we return, again and again, for that is where our children now reside. This will be so for years to come and it will change us profoundly. At some point in the distant future, the edges of that hole will have tempered and softened but the empty space will remain - a life sentence.

Our friends will change through this. There is no avoiding it. We grieve for our Children, in part, through talking about them and our feelings for having lost them. Some go there with us; others cannot and through their denial add a further measure, however unwittingly, to an already heavy burden.

Assuming that we may be feeling "better" six months later is simply "do not get it". The excruciating and isolating reality that bereaved parents feel is hermetically sealed from the nature of any other human experience. Thus it is a trap - those whose compassion and insight we most need are those for whom we harbor the experience that would allow them that sensitivity and capacity. And yet, somehow there are those, each in their own fashion, who have found a way to reach us and stay, to our comfort. They have understood, again each in their own way, that our children remain our children through our memory of them. Their memory is sustained through speaking about them and our feelings

SIBS

Siblings

Tomorrow,
 I'll try to understand her,
 Try to understand the excitement
 behind
 Those piercing black eyes.
 Try to understand her zeal for life,
 Tireless energy, and love for others.
 Tomorrow,
 I'll sit down beside her and get to
 know
 This sister of mine.
 I'll get to know the skinny little girl
 I grew up with and shared a bedroom
 with
 For all our teen years.
 Tomorrow,
 We'll share secrets together
 We'll go for long walks,

We'll just sit together for hours and
 augh.
 Tomorrow,
 I'll ask her about her boyfriends,
 I'll ask her about her girlfriends,
 I'll even ask what her favorite
 subject is in school. Today?
 I'm too busy,
 I have too much to do,
 She's getting on my nerves.
 Today,
 She's borrow my precious clothes,
 ruining them. Today,
 She's using up all the gas in my car.
 Today,
 She's asking stupid questions
 I just don't feel like answering.
 Today,
 I'm too tired.
 But tomorrow,
 I'll tell her how much I love her,
 I'll hug her and tell her she's pretty,

I'll tell her I'm glad I have a sister . .
 tomorrow.
 Tomorrow has finally come and she is
 gone.
written by Cindy, Kathi's sister
Taken from a book written by Kathi's
mother called, "18, No Time To Waste."

Open Letter to Our Siblings

Dear Sibling,
 How can I possibly tell you how much
 I miss
 you? But of course you probably
 know - since you knew me better than
 anyone. No matter how
 much time passes, I still wish you
 were here to share our lives and the
 future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times
 neglected each other, I just assumed
 that you would always be there. That
 we'd grow old together and remem-
 ber stories of growing up and laugh
 at each other as we looked and acted
 more like our parents. That we'd share
 our joys and setbacks, and adore each
 other's children.

Your death has rocked me harder
 than I could imagined I'd survive.
 Ultimately, there are no answers to my
 questions. There is no replacing you
 and there is no solace for my grief.
 There is only the simple choice I make
 every day to live on in the honor of
 your memory and the love we shared.
 To strive to carry on the best of who
 you were. To cherish the brief time
 we have with others. To celebrate
 the opportunity to be alive. To have
 compassion for the pain of others as
 well as my own. To have the courage
 to love fully as I have loved you and to
 remember that you would want me to
 go on and find joy again.

(Continued on page 8)

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



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, August 1st at 7:00 pm. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: Two of the articles deal with friends and family whose response to your child(ren)'s death is painful. Have you had this happen and how did you respond?

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.

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

about their death. Deny this and you deny their life. Deny their life and you no longer have a place in ours. We recognize that we have moved to an emotional place where it is often very difficult to reach us. Our attempts to be normal are painful and the day-to-day carries a silent, screaming anguish that accompanies us, sometimes from moment to moment. Were we to give it its own voice we fear we would become truly unreachable, and so we remain "strong" for a host of reasons even as the strength saps our energy and drains our will. Were we to act out our true feelings we would be impossible to be with.

We resent having to act normal, yet we dare not do otherwise. People who understand this dynamic are our gold standard. Working our way through this over the years will change us, as does every experience - and extreme experience changes one extremely. We

know we will have recovered when, as we have read, it is no longer so painful to be normal. We do not know who we will be at that point or who will still be with us.

We have read that the gap is so difficult that, often, bereaved parents must attempt to reach out to friends and relatives or risk losing them. This is our attempt. For those untarnished by such events, who wish to know in some way what they, thankfully, do not know, read this. It may provide a window that is helpful for people on both sides of the gap.

When you're newly bereaved, you don't see how you can put one foot in front of the other, much less survive this loss. You'll never "recover" from your loss nor will you ever find that elusive "closure" they talk of on TV—but eventually you will find the "new me." You will never be the same person you were before your child

died. It may be hard to believe now, but in time and with the hard work of grieving (and there's no way around it), you will one day think about the good memories of when your child lived rather than the bad memories of how your child died. You will even smile and, yes, laugh again someday—as hard to believe as that may seem.

When the newly bereaved come to a meeting of The Compassionate Friends, you will be able to listen and learn from others who are further down the grief road than you. They will have made it through that first birthday, first death anniversary, first holiday, and so many other firsts that you have not yet reached. You will learn coping skills from other bereaved parents who, like you, never thought they'd survive. There are no strangers at TCF meetings—only friends you have not yet met.

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

August 2024

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

You gave me so many gifts while you were alive and I continue to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling. I would not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

