

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



December 2024
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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:

December 5 - 7:00 pm - Meeting
see page 7

December 8th - Annual TCF Candle
Lighting - Plymouth Park - 7 pm

Tuesday, December 17 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.

No Craft meeting this month



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all
children who have died

Worldwide
Candle
Lighting®

... that their light
may always shine.

Sunday, December 8, 2024
7 PM Around the Globe



Annual Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

The Livonia Chapter Candle Lighting will take place in Kellogg Park on December 8th at 7 pm. There will be music, readings and all the names of children that have been submitted will be read. Families and friends are welcome. Candles are provided.

If your child(ren)'s name was on the list last year, it will be read this year. If you would like your child(ren)'s name added to the list to be read, call 734-778-0800.

From a Candle Lighting ceremony

-Frost

On a cold winter's day, Frost etches a beautiful artistry on everything it touches, every blade of grass it glitters and sparkles, and for moments before the sun comes out and the masterpiece evaporates before our eyes, we stand mesmerized, cherishing the wondrous sight.

Like frost, our children were only here for a brief moment but, while they were here whether it was moments in the womb, days, months or many years they etched their beautiful artistry of love on our hearts and lives and all of those they touched. Unlike frost, what they etched is forever, it is something that we can cherish and hold onto always.

We stand here tonight lighting a candle to remember children we will never forget: their light, their spirits, their artistry lives on and like the flame of the candle gives warmth on a cold winter's night. The light in the darkness the love our children gave us remains, it keeps us warm when the cold winds of grief blow. It lights our way through the darkness and loneliness that we feel, and it gives us hope!

Julie Short,

Southeastern TCF Candle Lighting

The Holiday Season

Getting through the holidays can be a difficult task for bereaved parents.

(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

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*

*“There are special people in
our lives who never leaves
us... Even after they are gone”
D. Morgan*

(continued on page 7)

We as bereaved parents needs to handle the holidays in a way that we feel is best for ourselves and our families. There are many things that bereaved parents can do to help ease the pain of the holiday season. Below are some suggestions that we thought may be helpful for you:

PLAN to be with people you enjoy.

VISIT the cemetery and take a Christmas tree to the grave. Decorate it with popcorn or food for the birds.

DO SOMETHING for someone else. Give a gift or make a donation in memory of your child. This can help to keep their memory alive.

INCLUDE YOUR CHILD IN CONVERSATIONS, once others realize that you are comfortable talking about your child, they can relate stories that will add to your memories of him or her.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES - it really can make things less painful. Change the time you open packages, or when the holiday meal is served.

KEEP IN MIND THE FEELINGS of our other children and family members. Let your needs be known to others and try to understand their needs as well.

MOST IMPORTANT, it is pointless to pretend that everything is the same as it was. As you accept your loss, give yourself the necessary time for grieving during the holidays.

TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME. Be realistic, and realize that we *all need* to set limits to do those things which are meaningful to ourselves and our families.

From the TCF Cape Cod Newsletter

Let's Say Goodbye to Goodbye

When someone dies, do we really ever say "goodbye?" You hear it all the time: They said their final goodbyes. Say goodbye to Grandpa. People who attended the funeral paid their final respect and said goodbye to a good friend.

What does "goodbye" really mean? Synonyms are farewell and adieu. Do we actually mean, "I will never see you again?" or does it mean, "Remove this person from your life" or perhaps, "So long for now until I see you again"? Think of someone special in your life who's died. Do you have someone in mind? Have you come across something that reminds you of this person: a song, a place, another person, a picture, a video, a movie, something online, a dream, a birthday or day they died? Do these sound like instances that reflect "goodbye"?

For example, if a man dies, how confusing it must be for his child to be told at the funeral, "Say goodbye to Daddy"? Later that day or a month or two or even years later the child may think, "I said goodbye to Daddy, but I still feel him with me. What's wrong with me?" How strange it must feel for a widow to be urged to say her "final goodbye" to her spouse of many years only to find herself months and years later still talking to him. She still says "Good night" to him and still asks him for advice. How odd for a teen-ager to be required to say "Goodbye" to his sister only to continue to search for her whenever he sees a crowd of kids or to live in her shadow as the years go by. How peculiar for a 50 year-old who was urged to say "Goodbye" to his mother only to feel her presence every time he walked into her house.

Goodbye is a term we should consider removing from our vocabulary. So, the next time you hear or are urged to say goodbye, you have to decide whether to remain silent and let the well-meaning person have their way or say something that comes from the title of a book by Sandy Fox, "I have no intention of saying goodbye." You might also add, "I know she died, but she is going to continue to be part of me the rest of my life."

She was part of you when she was alive, why stop now?

Bob Baugher, Ph.D.



If Only They Knew...

If only they knew when I speak of him, I am not being morbid, I am not denying his death. I am proclaiming his life. I am learning to live with his absence. For twenty-six years he was a part of my life, born, nurtured, molded and loved; this cannot be put aside to please those who are uncomfortable with my grief.

If only they knew that when I sit quietly, apparently content with my own company, I am not self indulgently unhappy, dwelling on things which cannot be changed; I am with him, I am seeing his face, hearing his voice, remembering his laughter, recalling his excitement and joy in life. Please allow me this time with him as I do not begrudge you your time with your children.

If only they knew when I sometimes weep quietly, I do not cry in self-pity for what I have lost. I weep for what he has lost; for the life he loved, for the music which filled his very being and for all he still longed to hear, for the poetry which moved him to tears, for the beauty about him that daily fed his soul, for the exhilaration and excitement of flying the skies, of searching for his God in the vast space of the universe. For all that he loved and lost, I cry.

If only they knew the feeling of deep grief, the emptiness and dull pain, the endlessness of death. If only they knew the insanity of the platitudes so freely spoken: that "time heals", that "you'll get over it", that "it was for the best", that "God takes only the best". "that he's in a better place, and realize that these are more an insult than a comfort, that the warm and compassionate touch of another means so much more.

If only they knew that we will not find true peace and tranquility until we are prepared to try to stand in the shoes of others. We will not be understood until we learn to understand compassionately and we will not be heard until we learn to listen with our hearts as well as our minds.

Jan McNess



Editor's note: I have been doing this newsletter for 21 years,, and I still try not to repeat many of the articles. However, the following one I have used more than once. The mental image just seems to speak to such a beautiful and intimate moment on such a special night.

Christmas Eve

Silent night, holy night...

"It's about time," he says quietly. Deliberately, wordlessly, they gather the materials carefully put away last year, the matches, the candle, candle jar to fend off the harsh winter wind. ***'tis the season to be jolly...*** Slowly they drive toward the town's edge, past homes with bright, blinking bulbs. Cars of faraway relatives fill their drives. Happy, laughing families, children home from school pass by the way to midnight mass.

It's the most wonderful time of the year...

At last, town lights left far behind, they sit mute, each wrapped in private cocoons of memories of Christmas past, excited whispers from their room, silly giggles, fervent goodnight kisses, anticipation of morning.

On a cold winter's night that was so deep...

Frozen grass crunching underfoot. Hand in hand they walk up the hill to the familiar moonlit stone.

With practiced hands they brush it clean,

then prepare their votive Noel.

The world in solemn stillness lay... —

Lump in throat, arm-in-arm, candle lit, they stand and weep,

but not so bitter as in years past. The pain's as deep but not so long, as once again they dream of things that should have been but never were.

The stars in the sky look down where he lay...

"Let's go" he says. She nods assent. They leave, though turn back once to see

the lonely flame of their lost boy gleaming peacefully through the dark.

He whispers softly, his visit done, "Merry Christmas and goodnight, my son."

Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Richard E. Dew, MD from Rachel's Cry

Grief Awareness

We live in a grief-illiterate society. Because people so seldom share their true experience of grief, we don't really know what to expect. What no one tells us about grief:

- Grief is isolating
- There are so many secondary losses
- The pain of grief can hit unexpectedly
- Grief is exhausting
- We may experience many feelings in one day
- Grief lasts longer than expected
- Grief profoundly changes us
- Grief brain is real
- You may lose your patience
- There may also be physical issues
- Grief is disorienting
- Grief is transformative

I hope that this is helpful to you. Each of us will have a unique experience with grief. But seeing these threads of commonalities and connecting with one another can help us feel connected and less isolated in our grief. Grieving is a natural, and essential human experience. And yet, navigating the pain and changes of grief can be overwhelming.

I hope that you will remember to be gentle with yourself.

David Kessler at grief.com



Playing with Three Strings

We have seen Yitzhak Perlman
Who walks the stage with braces on both legs,
On two crutches.
He takes his seat, unhinges the clasps of his legs,
Tucking one leg back, extending the other,
Laying down his crutches, placing the violin under his chin.
On one occasion one of his violin strings broke.
The audience grew silent but the violinist did not leave the stage.
He signaled the maestro, and the orchestra began its part.
The violinist played with power and intensity on only three strings.
With three strings, he modulated, changed and
Recomposed the piece in his head
He retuned the strings to get different sounds,
Turned them upward and downward.
The audience screamed with delight, Applauded their appreciation.
Asked later how he had accomplished this feat,
The violinist answered,
"It is my task to make music with what remains."
Make music with what remains.
Complete the song left for us to sing,
Transcend the loss,
Play it out with heart, soul and might
With all remaining strength within us.
Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

Time and the Holidays

The Holidays bring memories of past happiness, and the sorrow of the "never will be"

We hope you will find the time for yourself;
The time to reflect on the past joys;
The time to center yourself;
Time to cry;
The time to cry and clean your heart of the agony which builds;
And the time to say,
"Happy Holiday" to your child.
Somehow they will hear and will know.

Ray & Lynn

The Season of Obligation

The festive season is almost upon us again, "silly season," the season of joy and goodwill, of parties and celebration. Some of us like to call it the season of obligation. We are often obliged to seem happy and joyous.

Obligated to be nice to people we haven't liked all-year, people whose lack of sensitivity to our grief we have been expected to tolerate. We may be obligated to acknowledge religious celebrations, when all we ask is, "Why?"

Don't people realize how painful Christmas and all this "ho ho ho" is. Well, no they don't. They don't know how those empty places at the Christmas table leave such a void in all of us.

Many people start Christmas day with a champagne breakfast, while some of us visit the cemetery and are then obligated to face the festivities.

I will never forget one response when I expressed dread of Christmas Day. "It's not a very happy time for us," I said. "You see, two of my brothers have died, five places instead of seven for our table is fairly painful for us." "Oh well five is better than none, just eat, drink and be merry" came the response.

As a grieving brother or sister, helplessly watching our parent on top of our own usually guarded grief, is a very painful experience. It can sometimes be agonizing to bear.

As most of our friends live it up, we are faced with a miserable time in our own grief, often parenting our parents

through a very emotionally draining time.

For the shift workers amongst us "having" to work (or begging to!) is often a good escape from the obligation of it all. If this is your first Christmas, our hearts go out to you. But no matter how long it has been, please be gentle on yourselves as we all brace ourselves for yet another special time without our special people.

*Shayne Parfrey,
TCF, Victoria, Australia in memory of
brothers Jawod, 18 & Dean, 10*

To All Siblings...

Be guided by the reality that there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holidays after your sibling died. Do what you need to do to get yourself through the holidays. We grieve differently than our parents do. Yes, we need to respect their grief, but we need to remember ours. Our siblings would want us to laugh and sing along with the Christmas carols, but we just may not be ready yet. Guilt? Oh, yes, we will feel that this holiday season. But we may also celebrate their lives in our own special way. Whatever you choose to do, do what's good for you.

Everyone is at a different stage in their grief. The holidays make the reality of loss even harder. I hope this holiday season you can find peace and love in memories. Please know you are not alone.

*Vera, Sara's sister,
TCF, Kansas City, MO*

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

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

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, December 5th. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: We will have a candle lighting as a part of the meeting.

On Sunday, December 8th, there will be the annual candle lighting at Kellogg Park in Plymouth. The ceremony will begin at 7:00 pm. Join us as we light candles to remember our children, siblings and grandchildren who are gone too soon. Be sure to look for the memory tree. You are encouraged to bring family and friends.



Button Machine

For the next two meetings, there will be a button machine at the meeting. You are welcome to make a button with your child's picture

You don't get over the death of someone you love, you get through it. It becomes part of the fabric of your life.

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.

- ♥ Elizabeth Golden in memory of Andrew Golden; "It's been 8 years Andrew and it feels like forever!
Love You, Mom, Dad & Amy"
 - ♥ Elizabeth Golden in memory of Andrew Golden; "We love and miss you Uncle Andrew!
Love, Rose & Teddy"
 - ♥ V.Robert & Mary Vitolins in memory of Laura; "We miss you every day. Love, Mom,Dad and Sister Karen"
 - ♥ Judy Cappelli in memory of my son Christopher; "Happy Birthday Christopher. I am thankful for all the birthdays & memories that I do have. Just wish I had many more to celebrate with you.
Love you & Miss you."
 - ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens in memory of Justin; "Love you always Justin! Merry Christmas in heaven."
 - ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett in memory of Michael; "Merry Christmas in heaven, bud! We love and miss you so much! Love, Mom, Dad,Katie, Dakota, & Brooklyn"
 - ♥ Glen and Carol Mead in loving memory of Bobby; "Ah...the memories of past birthdays. Missing you, loving you, celebrating you. Happy 41st, Bobby. Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, DJ, Addison and Heidi. *
- * We want to apologize to Glen and Carol Mead, as their Love Gift should have been in last month's newsletter to celebrate Bobby's birthday. So very sorry!



Hung With Care

It has been a year since my 18-month old granddaughter, Katie, died of a birth defect, and I could still feel the grief.

"Maybe putting up Christmas decorations will make you feel better," my husband said, handing me the box of ornaments.

"Christmas won't be the same without Katie," I said. I opened the box. There on top of a pile of tinsel was Katie's stocking. I hadn't thought about what to do with it. I couldn't leave it off the mantle. It would be as if she's never been part of the family. But I couldn't leave it hanging empty

either. What should I do?

Christmas Day, I found the answer. "Katie was such a blessing in our lives," I announced. "I'd like to start a tradition in her memory." I passed around Katie's stocking which I'd filled with slips of paper, one for each member of the family. On each slip was an assignment to be completed in Katie's honor. Plant a tree, buy school supplies for an underprivileged kid, donate a book to the library.

Now every Christmas Katie's stocking turns out to be the best gift of all.

*Sarah Gill,
Northcutt, Miami, TX*

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

December 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



Hanukkah Thoughts

At this season of lights,
We remember the light you
brought into our lives:
The light of your laughter
The light of your wit and intel-
ligence
The light of your love
May the time not be distant when
the memory of these lights
Will illumine our hearts and minds
And eradicate the darkness therein.
Stephanie Hesse,
TCF Rockland Co. NY