

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



December 2021
Volume 33, Number 12

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 2 - Monthly Chapter Meeting - see info on page 7
December 12 - Annual Candle Lighting at Kellogg Park - see article this page
Dec 18 - CRAFT meeting - see pg 5
December 21 : 6:00 pm TCF Dinner-at Richard's Family Restaurant, 39305 Plymouth Rd., Livonia 48150. For more information, call Kathy 734-306-3930 or katjrambo@gmail.com. 5

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting

Join us December 12, 2021

"...that their light may always shine."

Livonia Chapter Annual
Candle Lighting
Where - Kellogg Park
Plymouth, Michigan

When - December 12 - 7 PM
Candles are provided.

The World Wide Candle Lighting will be held on Sunday, December 12, at 7:00 PM in Kellogg Park. Friends and family are welcome. The names from the previous list will be read, but if you would like your child (ren)'s name added, please call the Chapter leadership phone.(734) 778-0800. See page 7 for more information .

Candles in the Night

A heart broken by the death of a child can never be healed. As parents we try every way that can be thought of to cope with the loss, but the void will always be there. At first that empti-

A Huge Thank You to Gail

We would like to thank Gail Lafferty for her many years of service and dedication to our Livonia Chapter. Gail joined our group when she lost her precious son Max in 1995. Gail will be stepping down to spend more time with her family.

In memory of her son Max, Gail has done many things for our chapter to help keep our children's, grandchildren's and sibling's memories alive. She has been a Facilitator, Leader, Treasurer, Monitor for the Livonia Chapter Facebook Page and chaired the Worldwide Candle Lighting.

Gail was instrumental as one of the co chairs of the National Conference in 2006. Gail has also worked with Kathy Rambo doing the Crafty Corner at our National Conferences, helped us make wonderful crafts each month and started our Monthly dinners. She has also been the Regional Coordinator for Michigan. You will never know how many people you have touched in your many years of service with us!

We will miss you and your beautiful, warm smile (heart).

ness seems to take your breath away and most times we wish it would. This becomes different with the passage of time. It never goes away, but at some point we learn to live with it, and in fact

(continued on page 4) 1

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*

I Wonder ~

When did sadness stop covering everything? I don't know. It must have first been for moments, then maybe hours, days eventually. Then for a long time no longer ever-present, but just below the surface waiting for a thought to trigger it. Now I live with more joy than sadness but even now sadness surfaces unexpectedly as the dark shape of loss stirs the cauldron and tears are added to the soup of life, salty still, but not as bitter or overpowering, adding an important flavor to the whole of me.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

this horrible feeling becomes a lifeline of sorts. One of our biggest fears is to forget our children. Forget how they looked or how their voices sounded. The smiles and tears that can blur together to make a child. This emptiness in effect becomes a constant yearning to remember our children.

Our hearts force us to find ways to fill that void to maintain our role as parents. Some are as simple as visiting the cemetery and some are as complex as changing our entire lives, dedicated to the memory of our child. In between are the many rituals we create or borrow from others to honor the memories and to keep our child's name alive. Lighting a candle and saying a child's name keeps their memory burning bright. It means we are struggling to cope with this unwanted role of bereaved parent in the only positive manner we can.

We will most certainly shed tears every time and we will still miss our child, but we are doing something that allows the world to hear our child's name, and for that one moment, the candle means so much more than anyone else could ever understand. For a fleeting second that is our universe and every memory we have comes flooding back to us as we see the flame through tears, distorting it into something magical. It's the only gift we can give our children. This is as close as we can get to our child now. A tiny, flickering flame that can warm the heart and it's nice to think that perhaps they can see it also. It's a beacon, our light in the window, our shining star in the darkness. It's an opening of our hearts and a way to share our grief. We gather to honor the memories of our children and to share this bond of lighting a candle for the children all over the world. We miss them so much.

Jim Lowery

TCF/Sugar Land/SW Houston Chapter



Blue Christmas: Six Tips for Coping During the Holidays

The rest of the world seems overjoyed with holiday spirit and yet you just want to get in bed and pull the covers over your head. You're grieving. Perhaps your loss was quite recent or maybe it occurred years ago. All you know is that you dread this time of year and cannot wait for it to be over.

While the holidays are definitely a challenge for grievers, using these six strategies will help you feel a little less blue.

Talk about your Loved One – Don't be afraid to mention your loved one when you're at a party or with friends and family. Often people are reluctant to mention the deceased because they are afraid to "upset" you. They don't realize that your loved one is always on your mind and that it's healthy to reminisce. Be the one to share memories and to encourage conversation.

Express your Feelings – Holding in pent up emotion is not healthy. If you want to cry, let yourself cry. If you need to express anger, write in a journal. Try creative arts to express the many feelings you're experiencing. Use on-line sites to connect with other grievers and talk about your feelings. Letting yourself feel the pain and then finding expression for that pain is an important aspect to healing.

Light a Candle – Light a memorial candle at the holiday dinner table to honor the light of your loved one. Remember that although their physical form has gone, they are very much still a part of your life. Hold that love close to your heart and remember that your life has been enriched by their love.

Shop and Share – A frequent sadness for grievers is not being able to shop for their loved one. Try going shopping for things that you might have purchased for your dear one and then donating those items to a homeless shelter, a hospital, or a charity.

Cut Yourself Slack – Be extremely gentle and kind to yourself. If you don't feel like going to a party, don't

go. If you don't want to send cards, then don't send them. Do the absolute minimum necessary for you to celebrate the holidays. Grieving is exhausting and you simply won't have extra energy to expend. When possible, ask friends and neighbors to help you with tasks that feel overwhelming. Try to do your shopping online. Set your bar low and give yourself permission to take it easy.

Simple Pleasures – Even if your heart is broken, you can look for simple pleasures to savor. See if you can find one tiny thing each day for which you can be grateful. Notice your health, your loved ones who are still living, even small sensory pleasures like tastes, smells, and sounds. Try shining the focus of your attention on small things in your life that bring you some happiness.

Using these tips will help ease you through the holidays. Remember that grieving is one of the most universal of all experiences – you are not alone.
Ashley Davis Bush, LISCW

Facing the Holidays

Death is such a mystery, and when it happens to someone near and dear to us, death becomes all-too real. This is especially true when we experience the totally unacceptable, unexplainable death of a child. We wander around in a thick fog for a long time unable to focus on anything. Joy has been shocked out of us, and we feel numb to the world. Most of life loses all meaning in the first months following the death of a child. There is no joy. Unbearable pain has taken residence in our hearts, and nothing seems to be able to list the heaviness of it all.

This type of heart pain and brokenness is especially traumatizing during the holidays. We panic, not knowing how we are going to get through the next hour, much less the entire holiday season. It all feels like too much. And, in all practicality, it is too much for us to face, so we must set personal guidelines for trying to get through the holiday season following the death of our child.

It is wise never to try to follow the same holiday rituals and traditions expecting a happy outcome. Life has been turned upside down and inside out and is spinning out of control on most days. In the blink of an eye, your child's life on this earth was gone. You must now take the time to simply breathe deeply, try to relieve your body of all forms of emotional and physical stress, and take each day as it comes. Trying to do too much too soon is a sure-fire way to increase your level of anxiety and pain. Make no apologies and feel no guilt for your rollercoaster of emotions following the death of your child. Your life has gone through major changes, and your heart has endured some of the deepest pain known to all of mankind.

By letting others know that your holidays will be different this year because your life is now totally different, you have set the stage for some support. There's no sense at all in playing the pretend game. Your pain will eventually make its appearance to everyone around you. It's better to line up support from the early moments of your loss to make certain that you are surrounded by caring people who are trying to understand.

Find some way to include your child in the holidays. It will help your grieving to know that you have kept your child's memory alive. Some parents have found it helps to place a special ornament on the Christmas tree each year engraved with their child's name. Others choose to buy a gift and donate it to a child in need of some special holiday joy. Many parents light a candle and keep it burning through the holiday season as a way of honoring their child. Do something that will make you feel connected to your child. There is no right or wrong thing to do. Whatever works for you is the best choice.

Most of all, remind yourself daily that you will get through this holiday season without your child, and your pain will not always be this raw. The holiday season is a time of love, and there will be a day when special mo-

ments will warm your heart, and your grief will soften. By doing something to include your child in the family holiday, you are allowing yourself to cry tears of joy as well as sorrow.

Grief is a journey that takes time and lots of trial and errors along the way as you find what gives you the most comfort during your deepest hours of pain. Be extra kind to yourself, and, in time, you will be able to face the holiday season with moments of peace as you find new ways of holding your child close even in death.

*Clara Hinton, author of **Silent Grief***

Take Your Time

One of the hardest things about grief is the so-called "time table." You are told you should be feeling one way or the other. You are given a time to mourn by the outside world, and then you must be "over it." "Get on with your life." "Count your blessings."

All of this can make you both angry and afraid. Angry because (a) you don't WANT to "get over it," (b) you are "getting on" with your life in the best way you know how, and (c) your "blessings" have nothing whatsoever to do with the pain of your loss!

Afraid because you are not having some of the feelings you think you should be having because you are not reacting "normally." There is a period of extreme shock that can last from a few weeks to several months; you may not feel anything except numbness for awhile. That's OK!

The best advice is...take your time. Be gentle with yourself. Do what you need to do, not what you think you should do. Don't clutter up your life with things that will exhaust you physically and weaken you emotionally.

Remember, you are fighting the hardest battle you will ever have to face, so give yourself the best weapons you can. Rest, get in touch with your feelings, and talk. Say your child's name to anyone who will listen...take time...your time...to heal.

Sandra Young, TCF/Knoxville, TN



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 and light in the darkness, the love our children gave us still 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

Craft Gathering

Breakfast Gathering on Saturday, December 18, 2021 at Richard's Family Restaurant. 39305 Plymouth Rd, Livonia, MI 48150 (same place we meet for TCF Dinner) at 10 a.m. Please make reservations with Kathy Rambo (call or txt 734-306-3930). No crafting this gathering but support and fellowship that we all may need during the holiday season. Hope you can attend.

SIBS

To Our Surviving Children

and you were with us
when the darkness
came
you stood and grieved
and kept yourself alive
We thank you now.
we have not always
honored who you are
and often did not tend
your hidden sorrows
Forgive us now.
because you loved us
well enough to wait
until we could
return to you and know
with joy and hope and
love:
you are tomorrow

We celebrate your life –
and while we will remem-
ber always, always
the one, the many souls
who did not live,
we see you once again
for what you are:
the wealth you are,
the comfort
and the promise.
We thank you now.
Sascha Wagner

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the comfort
and the promise.
We thank you now.
Sascha Wagner

All I Want for Christmas What?

You ask me what I want for
Christmas?
I want this constant pain and hurting
to go away.
I want this anger - locked up inside
to go away.
I want the pain and suffering
I see my family go through every day
to go away.
I want this hole in my stomach
And this hole where my whole heart
once was to be filled
I want the happiness and joy I once
had to come back
I want the last three months to do
over.
I want my brother back,
*Treena Mohrbutter,
Evestevan, SK*

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

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 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

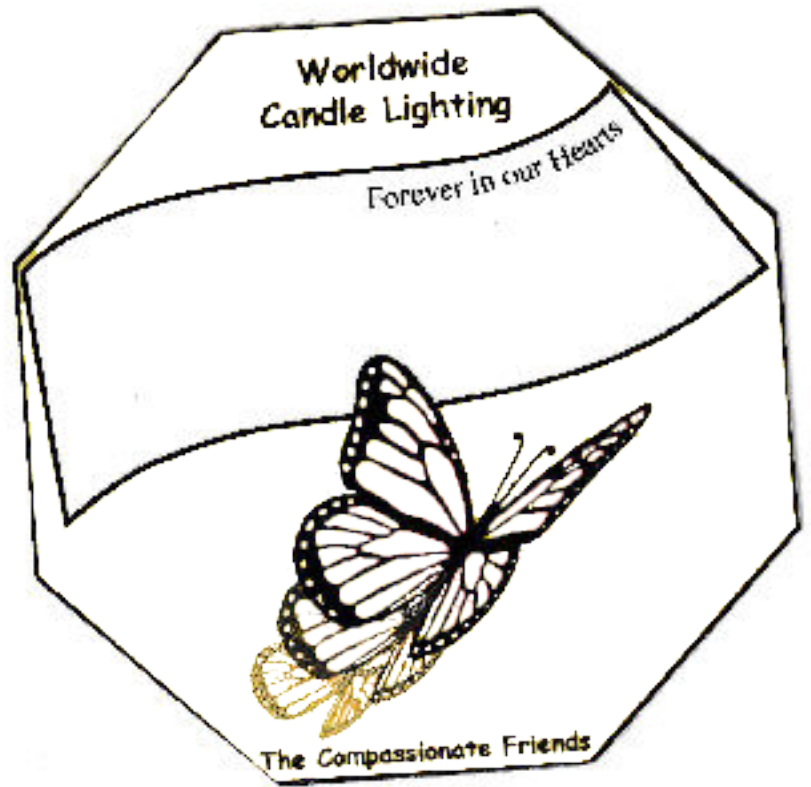
Siblings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least 16 years old.

Livonia Chapter Page

Directions for making your own ornament:

You can use the ornament template provided as is, cut it out and decorate with your child's name, a picture, stickers and/or the year 2021. Please do not use any birth or death dates. You can also cut it out, trace it onto different paper like scrapbook paper or cardstock, and then decorate as you like.

The next step is to laminate or use clear contact paper so that the ornament can be sealed and sustain our Michigan weather. Laminate and/or contact paper can be purchased at local stores and the office stores will laminate for you. You need to leave approximately 1/2" edge around the ornament so water cannot reach the ornament. Make a small hole at top on the laminate and put wire or string in the hole and attach it to the Memory tree.



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.

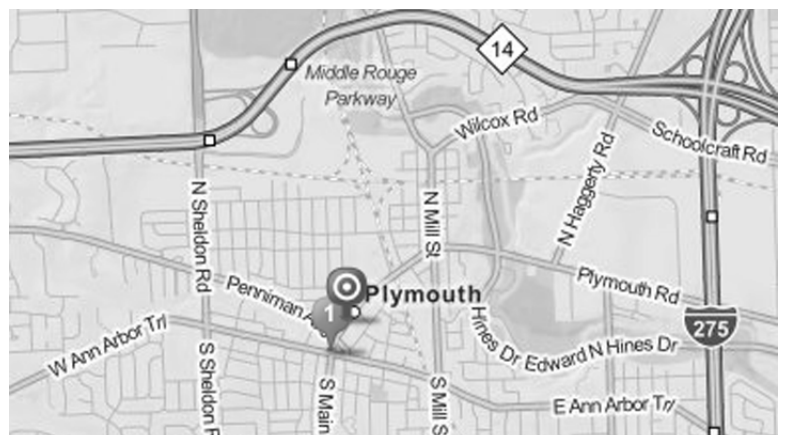
Henry Hachey, whose beloved daughter, **Mia Elizabeth Howard**, Born 6/25; Died 9/22; 17 years

Amy Lawson, whose beloved brother, **Robert Wooten**, Born 2/11; Died 1/27; 49 years

Carole Steede, whose beloved daughter, **Lindsay**, Born 6/19; Died 11/26; 33 years

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 on back page.

- ♥ Cindy Stevens in Memory of Justin "In memory of our son Justin. We miss you each and every day. Always in our hearts!
Love, Mom & Matt"
- ♥ Cathy & Jim Whitfield in Memory of: Jason "Always Loved, Never Forgotten, Forever Missed"
- ♥ Robert & Mary Vitolins in Memory of Laura "In Memory of our precious daughter Laura. Miss you each day. Love, Mom & Dad"
- ♥ Donna & Craig Storie in Memory of: Don "In Loving Memory of our son Don. We love you and miss you always. Mom & Dad"
- ♥ Tricia Custer in Memory of Brad "In loving memory of Brad"
- ♥ Glenn & Carol Mead in Memory of Bobby "Birthdays are never forgotten. You will always be in our hearts.
Happy 38th Birthday Bobby. Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, DJ, Addison & Heidi"



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

December 2021

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

Christmas Time

Christmas time will soon be here,
With Santa on his way.

The joy, the fun, has faded, son
Since you went away.

The kids will all be here again,
Around the fire we'll sit.

Talking of what used to be,
As we reminisce a bit.

The memories of seasons past,
Haunt me this time of year.

I can still see you on Santa's knee,
Whispering in his ear.

It isn't like it used to be,

When you were here to share.

A sadness comes, a tear is shed,
When we see your empty chair.

And so our Christmas Angel,
A candle we will light

And pray wherever you may be,
You'll think of us tonight.

Gail Macdiarmid