

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



February 2023
Volume 35, Number 2

The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

Chapter Leader

Joyce Gradinscak
Mary Hartnett
Cindy Stevens
(734-778-0800)

Newsletter Editor

Brenda Brummel
10531 Calumet Trail
Gaylord, MI 49735
231-585-7058
bbwriter59@aol.com

Treasurer

Mary Hartnett
5704 Drexel
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

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:

February 2 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

*February 21 - 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.

No Craft Day this month

*March 18th - Annual Bowling Fund-
raiser*



The Compassionate Friends

14th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 18th, 2023 at 2:00 pm
(Registration will begin at 1:15 pm)

Vision Lanes
38250 Ford Rd
Westland, MI 48185
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

Please let us know if you will be joining us so we can reserve lanes
Cindy Stevens @ 734-837-3722
Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410

\$25 per person

(Includes: 3 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza & pop)
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes

Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)
Mail to: Mary Hartnett 5704 Drexel St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

OPEN TO PUBLIC

Surviving With a Smile

All alone in a room full of people,
Trying to make it through another day.
Feigning interest in the conversation,
They don't know we don't care what
they say.
Time stands still for those who are
mourning.
Our lost child is constantly on our
mind.

Though we desperately want to live
normal lives,
Your absence is excruciatingly unkind.
Days, weeks and months continue to
pass by
And people don't really understand
So we keep our smiling masks at the
ready

(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 to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

And our “that’s so interesting” faces at hand.

What we truly want is to talk about you

For you are forever in our heads.

The first thing we think about in the morning

And the last thought at night as we go to our beds.

But, here we are in a world that knows not

How we can hide our pain for a while.

Though we are grieving and miss you fiercely,

We courageously present with a cordial smile.

Paula Grossman,

mother of Mitch

TCF Inner Loop Chapter, Houston, TX

The Valentines of Yesterday

In my lifetime I have received many Valentines. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, school friends, boy-friends, good friends, acquaintances and my husband have showered me over the years with lovely Valentines which I have so appreciated. The tradition of declaring friendship and love on Valentine’s Day is a very fond memory.

However, the sweetest Valentines I have ever received are from my son. From the first days in nursery school when my son made a hand plaque and a drawing on construction paper to the final Valentine in 2002,

I have cherished these gifts of love from my only child. I have kept every Valentine my son ever made for me or bought for me. I have every Valentine gift he ever gave me. These are the treasures that remind me how special a parent’s love truly is. There is no love to compare with the unconditional love we give our children. I think my son knew that nobody in the world would love him as much as his mother did. Yet, he also knew that he would love his children in just this same way. This unconditional parent’s love that we give our children is the most precious love in life. It is always our hope that they, too, will find the joy of this

love with their children.

When our child dies, we cling to our unconditional love as we feel the anguish of a final separation on this earthly plane and a tsunami of betrayal as the devastation of this incomprehensible loss sweeps over us. The pain is real. It is physical, emotional, psychological and forever embedded on our psyche. Yet, without that unconditional love, there would be no pain. Who among us would trade the most infinitely rewarding love and the subsequent pain of loss for a life of lukewarm relationships?

And so, as Valentine’s Day once again comes into my life, I will look back at this love, at the good times, the wonderful handmade childhood Valentine cards and gifts and the carefully selected cards of adulthood that my son gave to me. His words, his love, his appreciation for all that we had shared as mother and child will be reflected in these treasures. There will be tears, certainly, but these are tempered with the many wonderful, sweet memories of my son and his life. It is these sweet memories which sustain me, give me hope, and bring me gratitude for all that was given to me. My son is forever in my heart. He is with me every day and every night, and especially, he is with me on Valentines Day.

Annette Mennen Baldwin,

TCF, Katy, TX

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Bereaved Presidents

Did you know that... Twenty of our 42 presidents and their wives were and are bereaved parents?

John Adams, lost his son Charles, 20, while he was president.

Thomas Jefferson had six children and only two lived to maturity. One daughter, Mary, 26, died while he was president.

James Monroe lost a son two years of age.

John Quincy Adams lost a daughter in infancy; a son died while Adams was president; and another son died five years later.

William Harrison had ten children; six died before he became president.

Zachary Taylor had six children; two died as infants and a daughter died three months after her wedding.

Millard Fillmore’s daughter Abigail died at 22.

Franklin Pierce lost two sons in infancy. History records his wife’s grief was so great that he resigned from the Senate. Two months before his inauguration to the presidency, their only child, Benjamin, 11 years old, was killed in a railroad accident. Mrs. Pierce collapsed from grief and was unable to attend the inauguration. She secluded herself in an upstairs bedroom for nearly half of her husband’s term in office.

Abraham Lincoln lost two sons during his lifetime: Edward, four years old and William, 11 years old. He wrote, “In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all...it comes with bitterest agony...Perfect relief is not possible except with time. You cannot realize that you will ever feel better...and yet this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say.” The president’s wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, unable to cope with the assassination of her husband and the death of yet another son, Thomas, 18 years old, was confined to a sanitarium. Although she was released after a few months, she was never to be well again.

Rutherford B. Hayes had eight children, three of whom died in infancy.

James Garfield had seven children; two died while still infants.

Chester Alan Arthur’s eldest son died in infancy.

Grover Cleveland’s eldest daughter, Ruth, died at 13 years of age.

William McKinley, lost both children: Ida, four months old, and Katherine, four years old. His wife became so overwhelmed with shock and grief that she became an invalid for the remainder of her life.

Theodore Roosevelt's son died at 21 years of age.

Calvin Coolidge had a son, Calvin Jr., who died at 16 while his father was in office. Recorded in his autobiography, the president said, "When he went, the power and glory of the presidency went with him."

Franklin Roosevelt's son, Franklin Jr., died in infancy.

Dwight Eisenhower's son, Doug Dwight "Icky," three years old, died at Camp Mead, Maryland. In President Eisenhower's autobiography written in 1969 (49 years after Icky died), he stated, "With his death a pall fell over the camp. When we started the long trip back to Denver for his burial, the entire command turned out in respect to Icky. We were completely crushed – it was a tragedy from which we never recovered. I do not know how others have felt when facing the same situation, but I have never known such a blow. Today when I think of it, even as I now write of it, the keenness of my loss comes back to me as fresh and terrible as it was in that long, dark day soon after Christmas, 1920."

John F. Kennedy's two-year-old son, Patrick died while his father was president; Kennedy lost another infant prior to becoming president.

George Bush and his wife Barbara lost their daughter Robin from cancer at 4 years of age. "The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal..." Barbara Bush

Compiled by Harriet Deshayes, TCF, Fresno, CA

Am I Making Progress ?

January and February are months for making promises, commitments and resolutions (which are fancy promises). We begin our new year with high hopes, strong wills and long lists of things that will be different this year.

As we spend time looking back over the road we've traveled, sometimes we wonder if we have made any progress at all. In the beginning, we misplaced

car keys, checkbooks, toothbrushes, relatives and important stuff like the TV Guide. We had to begin making lists of everything. We simply couldn't remember anything. I couldn't remember my address, Social Security number, zip code or my mother-in-law's birthday. (I never could remember that.) Even started making lists of my lists! I knew I was going to be OK when I first discovered I could remember that I had made a list.

You know you're making progress when you can coordinate an entire outfit again. Shoes, belts, ties, purses--even sweaters and jackets--often got left, simply because when we were hurting so terribly we couldn't think about what to wear. Many of us didn't even know that the panty hose were on backwards or that the tie was crooked. If you are wearing matched shoes right now, then you are making progress.

You're making progress if you no longer choke back tears when you say your loved one's name. When you can walk down the cereal aisle in the supermarket and not dissolve into tears, progress is being made; When you can enjoy baking his or her favorite cookies or pie or cake again, you are on your way. When you again can set the pictures out and wander through the scrapbooks - letting the smiles peek through the tears - hope is returning. When, for the most part, memories bring comfort and warmth instead of emptiness and pain, January grows softer. When you begin to understand that putting away your loved one's things does NOT mean putting him or her out of your life, your step becomes lighter.

Progress occurs when you completely understand that though your loved one died, the love you shared can never be destroyed. Hope begins to return when you can hear laughter again - and some of that laughter is your own. Making progress through grief doesn't mean that we no longer miss our loved ones. They will be part of our lives forever, but their roles in our lives have changed. Our lifestyles and habits now reflect a

different family landscape.

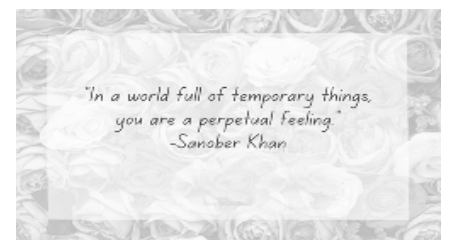
As we look back, it is amazing to see how the life fabric is no longer a gaping hole, torn apart. It's mended now with tiny stitches (perhaps a bit lumpy, like lots of us), patched with time, effort and love. Old threads and new threads have been rewoven and blended into a pattern not quite the same as we had originally planned. It is a tapestry of love given and received, love remembered and shared.

As the winter of our grief turns into spring, the renewed energy and love we feel becomes a memorial to our loved ones. Our tributes are not in the grave markers we decorate, not in the books we write, not in the speeches we give, they are in the love we share and pass on. You know you are making progress when all of this begins to make some sense.

Darcie D. Sims

Buried Heart

My heart stopped the day you died
I put it away in a heavy, metal box
Away from laughter and sunlight.
I buried the box
Beneath guilt, regrets and the pain of
not saying goodbye
Deeply buried under the pain of missing
you
I went searching for you
In forests, mountains and jungles
In deserts, meadows and beaches
Searching for a look, a trace, a glimpse
of you
But you came looking for me
In strange, unexpected places
You'd show up for a brief moment
when least expected
Bringing me a bird, a song, a sign
Unmistakably you
To show your love for me
To comfort me
To sustain me until we embrace again
Karen Howe, for Claire



SIBS

Do You Have Any Siblings?

I don't feel the warm rush of panic flood my chest when I'm asked this question anymore, though I've never quite gotten used to it. As a middle-aged mom, I don't actually hear it as much anymore. When I'm getting to know someone new, our inquiries tend to center around kids or jobs or news. So when someone asked me recently, I was caught off guard. We were at my mom's doctor appointment. My mind flitted around from the fire alarm that had delayed her appointment by a half hour to my mom's health to the stubborn disbelief that I was sitting there instead of my dad, who died a year and a half ago.

"Do you have any grandchildren?"

the doctor asked my mother. My mom told him about my children. Then, before I could even see the question hurtling toward me, the doctor turned and asked me: "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

The question sat between us, ripe and waiting. "No," I said. I shook my head, glanced at my feet. For a moment, I wondered: If the doctor had asked my mom if she had other children, would she have answered the same? Or would she have told the truth?

In the early years after my brother's death, the question haunted me. As a twentysomething at the time, I heard it often. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If I said, no, I don't have a brother, I felt like I wasn't honoring my younger brother, Will, who died at 21 from substance abuse. Saying

no also felt inherently dishonest. It painted an untrue picture — I had not been raised as an only child. I'd been Will's sister since I was three; I could barely remember being unbrothered. But if I said, yes, I had a brother, I'd have to also say that he died. Otherwise, they might ask where my brother lived, and if I answered, "In a box in my parent's liquor cabinet," things would get weird.

Dropping death into polite small talk almost always turns awkward. We don't learn how to speak about topics like death and grief and overdoses in school — we learn it either by being thrust into the bog of it or by having an unusually open and curious heart.

At some point, I decided on a loose rule for dealing with the inevitable question. If someone I was unlikely to have any type of consequential future relationship with — for instance, a hair stylist in a town I me if I had siblings, I'd say no and try to pivot the conversation to safer ground. If it was someone I might be edging closer to, like a neighbor or a new friend, I'd tell the truth: I had a younger brother, and he died.

The harder, more painful question now is the internal one that pulses just beneath the surface. No one has asked me it; I doubt anyone will. It's deeper and more crushing. Am I still a sister?

It's been nearly 22 years now since my brother died. He's been gone for longer than he was here. And while the brutal loss doesn't haunt me every moment like it did in those early months, it remains etched on my heart. It continues to evolve, just like our relationship would've. Should've.

A year and a half ago, when my dad was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer and my mom and I sat at his bedside, I sometimes imagined a third chair with us, my brother filling it.

(Continued on page 7)

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
Sibings 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, February 2 at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *“Can you recall sometime or sometimes that you have “Survived with a Smile?”*

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.

- ♥ Rex and Nancy Gleim in memory of: Ryan Huston Gleim
 - ♥ Carol Mead in memory of Bobby Mead; “In loving memory of our son Bobby. It’s been 8 years...keep your star shining bright. Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, DJ, Addison and Heidi”
 - ♥ Greg & Sharon Black in memory of Jordan: “Love and Miss you more each day. Love, Mom, Dad & Stephanie”
 - ♥ Stephanie Saran in memory of Megan Cloutier
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of Tom Jr; “Happy Birthday Tom Jr. 2/16 We love you & miss you “
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of our sons Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan ”Bryfro” Soupis considered a son to our family and Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey and Jim “Jimmy Vick”
-

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.

Cassandra Clark , whose beloved daughter, **K’san**, Born 3/06; Died 11/07; 27 years

Amy Helm , whose beloved son, **Brandon Crowder**, Born 7/06; Died 12/17; 24 years

Diane Ross , whose beloved daughter, **Linda**, Born 7/06; Died 10/18; 33 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

In the loneliness of my dad’s illness and death, I felt the stark pain of my missing brother rush over me again, the wide reminder of all the awful and beautiful thresholds he should’ve been here for.

Sometimes I wonder if acquaintances ever see my posts on social media and wonder why I’m still writing about my brother’s death all these years later. Why I keep dredging it up, running my fingers through the silt. Maybe I’d tell them it’s because I can still summon up those metallic early months after Will died, the vast loneliness of searching for books to accompany me in my grief and find-

ing more literature on pet loss than on sibling loss.

David Kessler, an expert in grief who worked with death and dying guru Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, has posited that there’s an often overlooked sixth stage of grief — meaning making. My interpretation of this sixth stage is that by taking some of the love I have for Will and alchemizing it into words that might help other grieving siblings, my love for him has somewhere meaningful and tangible to go.

I often receive messages from people who are wading through the raw and murky days after a sibling has

died. I’m always touched by these, always grateful. I usually say a little prayer for them, for the missing galaxy of their lost sister or brother, for all the future they feel robbed of.

And I also say a thank you — to my brother, to the universe, to some unseen power — for allowing me the opportunity to extend my hand, to peer back at all the milestones I’ve crossed and continue to cross without my brother. Because in these moments of quiet connection, in these slivers of mentorship, I still feel like a sister.

Lynn Shattuck

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

February 2023

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



Roses Are
Red

Roses are red
Violets are blue
How can I possibly
Go on without you.

Roses are red
Violets are blue,
Precious memories
Will get me through.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
I know you'd be laughing
At this poem.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Just Keep on Laughing
That's how I picture you.

*Much love to Guy Nathan
from Mom
Pam Kinsey
TCF, Livonia, MI*