

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



January 2022
Volume 34, Number 1

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:

January 6 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting - see info on page 7

January 15 - **CRAFT meeting** -
see pg 8

January 18 : 6:00 pm TCF Dinner-
at place to be determined. For more
information, call Kathy 734-306-
3930 or katjrambo@gmail.com.

New Year Goals

The holidays are over and I bet you're glad about that. You did make it through, though and by now maybe some of the stress of that powerful time has left you. Next year you will find you learned from this year, no matter how many years it has been and I hope it will be easier for you, too, in the years ahead. If you made New Year's resolutions, I hope they included:

To try to take it one day at a time.

To forgive yourself for whatever it is you feel you did wrong.

To figure out ways to resolve your anger so you can let go of it.

To concentrate on and value what you have let go as much as what you have lost.

To let those you value, know how important they are to you.

These are important steps forward. Try to be good to yourself in the New Year.

Mary Cleckley
TCF, Atlanta, GA

For The New Year

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.

- Let's not try to image the future.
Take one day at a time.

- Allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.
- Don't shut out other family members from your thoughts and feelings. Share the difficult times. You may all become closer for it.
- Try to be realistic about your expectations – of yourself, your spouse, other family members and friends. Each of us is an entity, therefore different. So how can there be a perfect understanding?
- When a good day comes, relish it; don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. It WILL come again and multiply.
- Take care of your health. Even though the mind might not care, a sick body only compounds your troubles. Drink lots of water and take stress-type multivitamins, rest (even if you don't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body heal, as well as your mind.
- Share your feelings with other Compassionate Friends and let them share with you. As you find you are caring about the pain of others, you are starting to come out of your shell – a very healthy sign.

I know following these won't be easy, but what has been? It's worth a try, don't you think? Nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

Mary Ehmann
TCF, Valley Forge, PA

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 only



January

Lisa Cherry	Russi Arden	January 07	52 yrs
Sam	Dee Banicki	January 20	30 yrs
Jason	Cheryl Beuther	January 08	43 yrs
Adam	Verna Birk	January 25	18 yrs
Blake	Brian & Kim Bowman	January 21	14 yrs
Amy	Pamela Brozack	January 28	39 yrs
Jeffrey	Jeff and Pat Callebs	January 20	27 yrs
Brandon	Cheri Castro	January 14	27 yrs
Costas Dario Cottos	Tara Tarez & Peter Cottos	January 29	10 mos

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

“Stuff”

I travel a lot and spend a great deal of time in airports. I spend most of my airport time working or reading, but sometimes it's fun to watch the never-ending stream of humanity making its way down the walkways, heading blindly toward someplace. I also love to watch that endless human tide board aircraft, carrying all manner of “stuff” that they then try to place in the overhead compartments. I have learned a lot from these observations. Traveling is a lot like grieving. We are headed somewhere with high hopes, little preparation, and too much baggage for any single human to carry.

We have become a society that defines itself by its “stuff.” Our stuff is simply who we are and without it, we risk becoming lost, disoriented, and disconnected. This stuff simply has to come with us at all times!

Grief is part of our stuff, too. Our experiences get boiled down to a few essential memories, phrases, and images that seem to become necessary to hold on to. It would be easier if we would pick and choose which memories to keep and which to toss. We could, perhaps, get away with a smaller version of who we are if we only knew we did not have to fear forgetting anything that has happened to us and felt more comfortable carrying fewer reminders of the hurt and more symbols of the joys.

Trying to pack for a trip means assembling the vast amount of “necessary stuff” and deciding what can be taken and what can't. Grievers are like that, too. Some seem to be able to release much of the pain and horror far sooner, while others stash it away, buried deep within themselves, only to emerge at the least convenient moment. Some try to cram a steamer trunk into the overhead compartment, having wrestled everyone else's stuff to the floor or simply moved it to another bin. Some try to compartmentalize their hurts with the idea that hurt and grief can be dealt with in an orderly and logical fashion.

But you can't pack away grief in the same way you can toss stuff into a suitcase and then stash it on a shelf until you are ready to deal with it. Grief simply is a part of our fabric, woven into each fiber of our being, always with us, but not always recognized or even acknowledged. It nudges us, calls us, teases us, hurts us at the least touch. Grief demands to be heard, and when we turn a deaf ear, it grows louder and more persistent until we grow weary trying to ignore it.

We can sort it out, roll it up tightly, pack it carefully, lock it away, or even carry it around with us, but we cannot ignore it forever. It returns again and again until we learn to embrace it, wrestle with it, and adapt to its flow. If we are lucky, we learn to carry the load we have without too much guilt or anger and have found ways to release the emotions that accompany our grief.

So, pack what you truly need, give the rest away, and get going on your travels. Each breath takes you closer to your destination, even if you don't know where that is. Learn to let some things go so you can pack lighter next time. You could let go of some of the guilt or fear or anger or hurt. How about weeding through the awful parts so you can get to the loving parts? Don't discard it without embracing it first, but once you have examined the whole picture, let go of the “stuff” you no longer need to carry in order to define yourself. Let go of the labels and the worries.

Will it happen again? It could. Will I be able to handle it better next time? Maybe. Will I ever find love like that again? Not unless you look for it. Will I forget? Not likely. Maybe that is why we believe we need so much stuff around us all the time. Maybe we are really afraid of losing it all, not just the bad parts, but the good times as well. Do we carry too much, save too much, pack too much because we are afraid?

Just as you have never forgotten the name of the very first person you fell in love with, you will not forget your

child. If we let go of that fear, we all can travel a bit lighter. Fear is a heavy burden to carry. You cannot forget love that has been given and received. You cannot forget the exchange of heart and soul. You don't need the stuff in order to remember the love.

Love is the size of a sigh, as light as a kiss, as gentle as a whisper, and as small as a moment in time. It comes in all sizes and shapes and cannot be saved until later. Love simply IS, and you have been loved. So lighten up. Carry less, live more, and love a lot. Love is a good thing to carry and really the ONLY ESSENTIAL thing we need!

Darcie D. Sims

A Time Past

I remember the first time I had the courage to look at old photographs of Kara—as a little girl, a young girl, a young teenager. How I dreaded it, but at the time was compelled to do it. To my surprise, the negative impact of “past, past, those days are all gone,” wasn't nearly as acutely painful as I had expected since I had already looked at those same pictures before her death in terms of “a time past.” Of course it didn't bother me then because I knew she had a future.

Truly, it helped me focus more accurately on the reality of my grief: I had lost Kara's future with us, not her past. Now, I am freer to enjoy those past photographs of a life we shared. I hold them dearly to my heart with all my other memories. My next goal? To work up the courage to look at old movies! This will take time, but I will do it eventually.

*Marcia Olson
TCF, Hinsdale, IL*

Names

Our names mark our presence on the planet. They give credence to the reality of our existence. One of the great joys of becoming a parent is that we get to select the name for our child. We know that these little ones will be identified by their names all through their lives—and after they have died.

When I look at the *Our Children Remembered* pages each month, I often think about the children, how dearly they were wanted, how carefully they were named. I can imagine the discussions about the names, the choices, the final decision. Then the welcoming of the baby into the world. I am touched by the words of parents who write so movingly about their children, wanting so much to hear their beautiful names. Our fear is that these beloved names will be silenced and forgotten.

My parents' first child, a nine pound boy, died at birth. My mother decided not to name him; she wanted to save the name for a hoped-for future son. (My dad left the decision to her.) The baby was buried in an unmarked grave in a family cemetery. I have wondered, in the years since my own son died, if not naming the baby was an effort to stem the horrible pain of his death. My parents told my brother and me about the first baby, but, like most people of their generation, they did not discuss their feelings about his death.

The baby was present in our family, however, even though unnamed. For years in my childhood, I daydreamed about my older brother and what my life would have been like had he lived. It felt odd that he had no name. I made up names for him, gave him adventures, let him be a hero in my life. He may have been unnamed, he may never have breathed, but he influenced my life.

I think my mother erred in refusing to name the baby. I have the deepest respect and understanding of her decision and her pain, and I think much of it was due to her shock at the baby's death and the tenor of society those long years ago. But, oh! how important are our children's names. They are our songs, our music. We love their names; we love the souls who bear those names. We meet a baby with our child's name, and we feel connected. We compare spellings. We look at their hair, their coloring, their wonderful eyes. We remember....

*Kitty Reeve TCF,
Marin and San Francisco, CA*

Tenses

The past tense does not suit her.
We speak of her in the tense of current time.

She dwells in the present.

She is beautiful.

She is smiling.

She is loved.

She is of action,

Is of the moment,

Is of living now, and here.

The past tense does not suit her.

The past tense does not suit her,
But we cannot speak of her in only now.

She wears the future well.

She will always be beautiful.

She will ever be smiling.

She will never be without love.

She will live her life to its fullest,

Because she will always know

That she cannot know what the future holds.

The past tense does not suit her.

The past tense does not suit her,
But now we have no choice in diction.
She is held out of now forever, without consent.

She was beautiful.

She was always smiling.

She was loved.

She has lost all her possibilities

Of present

Or future, but

The past tense does not suit her.

The past tense does not suit her,
But we cannot lose her in "would be"
and "was."

She must be kept in "is" and "will."

She is beautiful.

She is smiling.

She is loved,

If only in memories.

She will always be beautiful,

She will always be smiling,

She will always be loved,

As long as those memories

Do not fade into the past.

The past tense does not suit her.
Whitney Reynolds

Missing You

I sometimes talk to your pictures
When no one else is around.
They listen patiently to my ramblings
They smile and never make a sound.

There's one picture in particular
Your eyes right in my line of sight
The smile on your face reflects the joy
On one of the happiest days of your life.

That picture has been my whipping
post Many heavy conversations in the
past six years
It's witnessed the gamut of my emotions
It's seen me laugh, it's seen countless
tears.

There have even been some times
When that picture almost seemed to
smirk
After I sincerely apologized
For all the times I was a jerk.

Of all the pictures that we have of you,
It would be impossible to pick just
one. There's just something about your
smile I didn't see it until you were
gone.

So many things you never got to do
Your time ran out before your dreams
came true.
I'll look into your eyes and talk to that
picture

I'll see you again someday. I miss you.

Tom Murphy

*Greater Cincinnati TCF - East Chapter,
OH In Memory of my son, Brennan
Murphy*

The children

*who were with us
in the rush of life,
let them now be with us in the
peace of spirit.*

*Memories are a legacy of hope and
courage, left to help us go on when
the giver is gone.*

From *WINTERSUN* by Sascha

SIBS

A Sibling Dies

It is January first. My heart twinkles once again because the holidays are over. How can a season of light bring so much dark? Thirty years ago, on Christmas morning, my brother died in our home by suicide in a very violent manner. He was 23; my other brother was 24; and I was 19 years old. Our family of five was irretrievably shattered.

Don, my brother who died, was so much a part of us. He brought so much joy in his living and then so much pain in his dying. Who am I to grieve him still? The memories well up every December like a deep dark night unbidden.

Anger, sadness, rejection, guilt become my Christmas ornaments.

“Give me back my family - give me back my Christmas, you creep. Give me back your laughter,” I want to shout at him. Who am I to miss him? Who am I to rage when he was the one in the grips of a pain so untenable that he could not speak of it, but only act upon it? Who am I to cry? Well, I’m entitled. I’m a survivor after all. One doesn’t get there on a water slide, if you know what I mean.

When Christmas rolls around, I do my dance with grief once again. Some years, it’s a waltz; other years a tango. It doesn’t seem to matter if it’s two, twenty or thirty years since my brother died, I get out my dancing shoes. I don’t go looking for pain like some wacky masochist. It finds me.

Some years I announce - around November 25th, “I’m over this.” I act accordingly. I shop for Christmas

Cards and don’t go near my dancing-shoes. It doesn’t matter. They find me. It’s not like I didn’t have therapy. I’ve had dance therapy, art therapy, regular therapy, travel therapy, friendship therapy, biofeedback/hypnosis therapy, cream puff therapy, swimming therapy, forgiveness therapy, spiritual community therapy, law school therapy ... Law School therapy? The fun had to end somewhere.

Seriously, losing a sibling is heart wrenching and no laughing matter. It took me ten or fifteen years to truly laugh again, let alone make light of myself. That just happened this year. No doubt, because I am writing of it, rather than speaking of it, which I rarely do. It feels safer to write. Other than to therapists, I’ve spoken of his death to three people in thirty years. Who could understand, I felt, and why diminish his being or expose myself?

I adored my brother Don - he made me laugh like a monkey. I adore both my brothers; as a child they were my world. Not very healthy perhaps, but it worked for me. Home life was chaotic and quite frightening because my father was more than a little nuts. My mother’s energy was spent containing his insanity and keeping our bodies and souls together. She was part steel, part angora.

We never spoke of Don after his death. The community ostracized us; my father took a trip down devil ‘s lane, and my mother mourned my brother until the day she died. I’m sad to say that we never had Don’s picture in our home again, because the pain was too severe. It seems we could not get past it. We went to our separate corners and quietly mourned. It was different years ago; so much remained hidden. Selfhealing groups were non-

(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

Siblings 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, January 6th at 7:00. First time tables; topic tables **“Did you make any resolution about your grief for 2022?”**

From your leadership: Our January Chapter meeting will be held inside the church, unless we hear different due to covid concerns. Please check our Livonia Facebook page for any updates.

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.

Carol Lacasper, whose beloved daughter, **Melanie**, Born 10/14; Died 5/5; 45 years

Pamela Penn, whose beloved daughter, **Italya Marie Young**, Born 1/11; Died 9/7; 22 years

Janet Macleod, whose beloved daughter, **Kathryn Kayko**, Born 8/20; Died 6/6; 20 years

Linda Spears, whose beloved daughter, **Samantha Huckabell**, Born 1/9; Died 5/15; 31 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.

♥ Dave & Sharon Curson in memory of David Jones II; “In Memory of our Beloved Son David. Our family misses you!

We love you always and forever. Mom, Dad & Family”

♥ Cindy & Matt in memory of Justin “In Memory of our son Justin Bolin on your Angel Day. Been 9 years.

Always in our hearts “Big Guy” Love you!”

♥ Susan Steinberg in memory of Shannon “Happy Birthday to our Beautiful Daughter and Sister.

Love, Mom, Dad, Todd and Chris”

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

existent, shrinks were stigmas, and the Catholic Church unforgiving.

I couldn't save him. I was the last person he talked with on Christmas Eve. For months, I barely spoke and relived the shock daily. I ate a lot. Death by mashed potatoes. That was sure to bring him back. I retreated into a private world for several years where if I wasn't dead, I'd sure like to be. This is grief. And it does soften over time. It softens like water softens rock, in its flowing, gentle,

rushing, mysterious way. It softens like a sweet whisper of a memory that lulls you to sleep, knowing that love knits the bones of despair together, tighter, stronger, more curious, more delicious than ever before.

Knowing that the fires of your being burn the cross of despair. Knowing that the chamber of the heart is strong beyond measure and can take it and transform the pain into joy. Joy for having known this person,

for a day or ten years or two months. Joy for having the courage to be. For knowing yourself in many garments. For taking a risk to love anyone again: a neighbor, a friend, a cat, a lover, a stranger, yourself. The broken heart opens and mends itself. In the middle of the night, when no one is there but many are listening, joy seeps into me. After all, I'm entitled.

I'm a survivor.
TCF Mann County & San Francisco Chapters

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

January 2022

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



Our January Craft day will be meeting at the Plymouth Library, 223 S. Main St. Plymouth MI. Parking is behind the library off S. Union St.

The date is Saturday, January 15th from 10:00 am 1:00 pm. We will be making tiles using our photos of our children (you bring) or other photos/sayings (we supply). Examples will be at the January meeting (if church is available to us). Please text, call or email Kathy and let her know at: (734-306-3930 or Katjrambo@gmail.com) we will need to know so we have enough supplies. Cost \$3.00 each.