

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



July 2026
Volume 38, Number 7



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:

July 2nd-7:00 pm - Meeting:

see this page for info

July 21st Tuesday, 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 until further
notice.**

**49th TCF National Conference in
Baltimore, MD**

July 2nd - July 5th

www.compassionatefriends.org

Fireworks Are Like the Love In Our Hearts

July brings Central Oregonians lingering blue skies, lazy afternoons and the Fourth of July celebration, complete with the grand fireworks finale bolting from the top of Pilot Butte. This was one of my son's favorite holidays. When he was six, I asked him why fireworks were so special to him. He said, "The lights explode in the dark and make the whole sky light up!" That was obvious. I said "Hum?" He gave me one of his "Oh mom" looks, then went on to say, "The fireworks are like the love in our hearts, we should always try to spread our love out to others". I knew then and I still am aware today that profound wisdom comes from the lips of our children.

From the summer on, in my mind, fireworks have been a triumphant testament of love's enduring power and wonder. I miss my son, Joshua, terribly. I comfort myself knowing that his wisdom and kindness were precious gifts in my life. Wherever you are on the Fourth of July, I hope that the splendor of sparkling fireworks might comfort as you acknowledge that the love you hold dear for your child is the light that is able to shine through you. We all have known grief well, yet as compassionate friends we need not

walk alone in the darkness. We can lighten the path for others.

Grief can cripple and destroy us, but as we gather to share each other's burden, we are able to gain strength. Love for our children is our common flame, sharing and caring keep the flames afire. I look forward to our next meeting and the opportunity to hug and listen to my comrades.

*lovingly lifted from
TCF Salem, OR Newsletter
Jane Oja,
TCF, Central Oregon Chapter*

Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs. We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summer—

(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*

time is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.

Sascha Wagner

The Grief Gremlin

The toothbrush holder, the laundry basket, the magazine rack, a kitchen shelf—each of these is such an ordinary, simple part of any home. Yet, each can be so completely associated with grief as to cause our chests to heave deep sobs with just one glance. That seems obvious to all of us survivors, but to the outside world, that first sentence must appear to border on insanity, don't you think? Let's take a look at them, one by one. Who can forget walking into the bathroom for the first time after death has visited your home and seeing one toothbrush that won't be used again? It doesn't seem important to those not trying to survive a loss, but just the sight of a never-to-be-used-again toothbrush is akin to a body blow. Oh, how it hurts! Is it possible that it was being used only yesterday?

Maybe your laundry basket was always full, and load after load of clothes were washed and dried, keeping you plenty busy. Suddenly, you look in there and without your son or daughter, it seems nearly empty. Just the sign of that basket seems to scream out "She's gone! No cheerleader uniform to clean; no soccer shirt to coat with Spray 'n Wash, no grumbling to be heard if the socks got mixed up or one is missing. Or maybe you've not always emptied the basket but focused on doing the essentials first. Suddenly, with less wash, you notice your son's football socks lurking in the bottom of the hamper. Oh, to have the opportunity to wash them for Friday's game; to see him proudly running onto the field in his uniform!

A magazine rack seems non-threatening, doesn't it? Why in the world would that be associated with instant grief? Maybe you don't dig down into it very often but just keep piling on the latest issues. At some point, you mindlessly curb the overflow by weeding through the old issues. Suddenly, there it is: his Golf Digest; her Teddy Bear catalogue; his Cruise Travel. Oh! It literally sucks the air out of your lungs.

Nobody ever said grief would be so personal, so every day, so vicious to attack in such unexpected ways! Those kitchen shelves appear innocent at first glance, too. But then, the summer heat is replaced by fall's nip in the air, and a hot mug of cider would be just right. So you reach up and, oh! There's her mug. The Precious Moments winter scene she loved to show off at work, or his favorite row of free Credit Union mugs that you tried to retire to the Goodwill box, but he insisted were vital to life itself! Ugh. It's that blow to the heart again. And you think, but all I wanted was a cup of cider, and I end up with a box of Kleenex? How?

It's the Grief Gremlin. He shows up when least expected. He seems to have an internal clock that tells him to avoid holidays, birthdays anniversaries — those days when we would expect to be zapped by grief reminders. The Grief Gremlin puts in his appearance when we're going about our daily routines, when we finally have a grip on the start of another day and think we might survive a few more hours of it; when someone has cracked a joke, and we actually chuckled just a little. Then, wham! Without warning, he jumps us and suddenly turns an ordinary minute into a gut-wrenching memory moment instead. It isn't easy when he appears, is it?

I think the hardest part is that we can't get ready for him! We try to plan ahead for hard holidays, but when the Grief Gremlin shows up, we can never be prepared.

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Magazine, www.bereavementmag.com.

Crying Over Spilled Shampoo

A few short months after the death of my son, Luke, I was showering with anticipation of washing my hair with a new coconut-scented shampoo that I just purchased a few days earlier. I lifted the bottle and let the shampoo spill into my hands. As I closed my eyes, the scent pulled me back in time, to the beach, and the

unexpected memory of coconut oil -- back to a time of Luke's childhood.

The scent of that shampoo overflowed into all of my senses. For just a moment, I was back on the beach rubbing coconut oil on my little boy and I could see his beautiful dark skin, feel the warmth of his tiny hands, hear his familiar voice smell the wonderful scent of coconut oil. Once again, I could taste the salty ocean.

Then, I opened my eyes and, in an instant, I was drawn back into reality. It was then that I realized that the dark skin that I saw was only the back of my eyelids, the hands that I felt were my own, the voice I heard was the sound of the water trickling on my head from the shower, the smell of the coconut oil was my new shampoo, and the salty ocean was simply the taste of my very own tears.

Christine Ross, In Loving Memory of Lucas Christopher Ross 1979 - 2001

My Secret

Within days of my son's tragic death helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through every drawer, cabinet, and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to with his clothes, his video tapes—even his toothbrush—made my head swim.

Although I gave away many of the things to his roommate, other friends and family, and to "Goodwill," I kept the "special" things for myself—school yearbooks, pictures, certain articles of clothing, and his collection of crazy T-shirts. I put this strange assortment of things in his footlocker, a remnant of his boarding school days.

What I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the T-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the footlocker with my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the footlocker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine. Then I would take the

unwashed T-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant, and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel, for just moment that he wasn't really so far away.

"What a perverse thing to do!" I thought. I'm sure no one else would understand my doing such a thing—they would surely think I'd gone off the deep end. So I never told anyone about this strange behavior—and the odd comfort it gave to me.

Months later at a National Conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose son had died suddenly and how she had refused to wash the soiled shirt he had been wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. "My gosh," I thought, "maybe I'm not so crazy after all."

Since this experience I have discovered this is not as uncommon as I had once thought. The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand, or the tenderness of a kiss. There is nothing "perverse" in wanting to cling to these precious memories. Memories are what remain after the death of our child and there is comfort to be found in them.

*Carole Ragland
TCF Houston-West Chapter, TX*

Take The Time . . . To Hurt, To Cry . . .

"Wordless and worldliness -- Endless and forever, Grief goes on -- It takes the best -- And leaves the rest an empty shell -- Life is Hell."

David was dead four months when I wrote that in my journal. Time is my enemy. As I envisioned the future of my life, I saw only a vast expanse of desert - dry, parched, and empty. It is now a year and a half since David's death, and I recognize that time has become my friend.

Now, when I look to the future, I see hills and valleys - struggles, to be sure, but, also, moments spent at the summit. What has happened?

Time is healing.

Take the time . . .

To hurt . . . The pain is great and the temptation to run away is great. But, there is no avoiding, no escaping the hard feelings. If you cover them over, they only re-surface later in a potentially more destructive way.

To cry . . . It may feel like once started, you can never stop. But you have every reason to cry, and when you have cried enough, you will stop.

To "fall apart." . . . If you have a broken leg, you would not expect yourself to function at full capacity right away. Your wound is much greater - you have a broken heart. Confusion, inability to concentrate, lethargy, imagined glimpses of your dead child are a normal part of the grieving process and do not mean that you are going crazy.

To be "selfish." . . . Mourning is an egocentric time, a time for turning inward and introspection.

To "identify" . . . and seek out resources in your environment that can help: friends, clergy, Compassionate Friends, a counselor. Talk to them. Having done all that - having lingered in the valley of the shadow - it is time to begin the climb out.

Take the time . . .

To engage again in activities that were once pleasurable. They may hold no joy the first few times; someday they will and that will be all right.

To laugh without guilt. Savor the good moments in the day, brief though they may be. Through your child, you can re-discover the beauty of a sunset.

To care for your health. Grieving is a physio-, as well, as psycho-logical stress. Your body needs protection.

To be patient. Wanting to live again and learning to live again takes time. The path out of the other side of the valley is steep, and we all often stumble. But with time - time spent doing the work of grief - you can find the path to a world made richer by your love.

*Bronna Romooff, PHD
Albany, NY, TCF*

First Step

When my brother died in a car accident seven years ago, I was reminded of a 17 year-old boy I knew in high school who had lost his father suddenly. I hadn't known anyone who'd lost a parent before then, and I was curious about how he had acted at the funeral. It made quite an impression on me when I heard that he was calmly speaking with his friends and thanking them for their support. I told myself then, that if I were ever in that situation, I would also be strong.

As I stood in the kitchen seven years ago with "He didn't make it" echoing in my head, I remembered the boy whose father had died. I wanted to be brave like him, to be strong for those around me. I wanted to show everyone

that I was resilient, and I wanted to deliver what everyone was telling me to deliver. All the calls and visits began or ended with someone saying, "Be strong for your parents. They need you to be strong for them now." There was also a popular song playing on every station with the lyrics "You got to be cool. You got to be calm. You got to stay together .. You got to be strong. You got to be wiser."

I made it my mantra. I couldn't sleep, so I'd silently chant to myself, "You've got to be strong. You've got to be strong". At first my parents thanked me for showing strength. They were amazed that I was able to walk around and shake hands and thank people for coming to the wake. I tried to reassure everyone while my parents struggled to respond to the

sympathy of friends and family members. They didn't feel capable of much conversation. I spoke at the funeral while they listened, tearyeyed, in the pew. I thought I was reaching deep, pulling out powers of resilience that had been dormant in me. I was proud of myself for putting others at ease. At the same time, there were questions slowly rising to the surface of my consciousness. What about you, Scott? When do you take care of yourself? What do you need? I felt guilty worrying about myself when, according to everyone around me, my parents were depending on me. Not that I ever took the time to actually discuss it with them - I just assumed I was supposed to be the unbending oak. I cried every day, but I made sure I didn't cry in front of them. I left the room if I felt tears building. I tried to push the questions into a dark, distant corner of my mind. I'd answer the phone and hear, "It must be hard for them. Please tell your parents that our prayers are with them." When I hung up, I couldn't help wondering why the callers didn't say, "It must be hard on the three of you. Our prayers are with you."

Then my parents began expressing their concern for me. Sensing my isolation, they began to realize that my grief was being overlooked. They realized that they were getting all the support while I was being told to support them. They said they worried

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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
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: PO Box 46, Wheaton, IL. 60187

Phone: (877)969-0010; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: mfedel2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room) 1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; tcfannarbormich.org
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

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

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, July 2nd at 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables. Topic Table: ***What is or was your "Grief Grem-lin?"***

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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.

Bernadette Barratt, whose beloved daughter, ***Denise***, born 5/23 died 12/27; 56 years

Kristina Wakeman, whose beloved son, ***Tommy Meyer***, born 2/11; died 3/22; 19 years

A Love Gift -No dues or fees are required to belong to The Compassionate Friends. We have all paid the ultimate price, the loss of our loved ones. Parents and others may provide financial support for our chapter through Love Gifts. It is a beautiful loving way to remember our loved ones. Love Gift form is on back page.

Sandra Weisl in memory of ***Scott***; "Scott, not a day goes by that I don't think of you. Happy 56th Birthday.
Love You Forever, Mom"

Tom & Connie McCann in memory of our sons ***Tom Jr.*** on his angel day 7/15 & ***Joe Coffey*** on his angel day 7/26
In memory of: our sons ***Ryan "Ryfro"***, ***Tom Jr.***, ***Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis*** (considered a son to our family), ***Mark "Sparky" Abbott***, ***Joe Coffey & Jim "Jimmy" Vick***

"Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All of that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."— Jamie Anderson

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

July 2026

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

about me. They asked who was supporting me. Their empathy helped me accept and admit to my private concerns. I could only be strong for so long. Nature was telling me something. I had to stop moving, stop reassuring, and stop acting for the sake of others. I had to admit that I didn't know how to handle grief. I had to stop being the steady, reassuring voice in our family and let the sadness come over me. I had to cry and find some time to be alone. I didn't have to learn to live with the full reality of my loss overnight, but I had to let the grief take me and begin to learn. That's when my journey, as a surviving sibling, began.
*Scott Mastley
TCF, Atlanta GA*