

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



July 2023
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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:

July 6- Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

**July 18- 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

**July 7-9: 46th National Conference,
Denver, CO**
www.compassionatefriends.org

Courage

You are braver than you will ever know. You may not realize it but you are valiant, magnificent and strong in spirit. You are courageous. You have endured and somehow survived the most horrific injury that anyone in this life can suffer. Your child has died. But somehow you have miraculously found the strength to still breathe in and out. And after a while, you managed to put one foot in front of the other and have tried to the best of your ability to adapt to a strange new world; one that exists without your precious child in it. A world you must step out in to and face every day without any outward signs that you are altered for life.

If you were to wear your most grievous wound displayed on the outside of your body like permanent stigmata, would people recoil from the sight or would they perhaps offer compassion and understanding for your piteous condition? That's why you are so brave. Although no one else can see how horribly injured you are, you are still doing your best to function and participate in this life.

I want to challenge you to be brave just once more. If you have not been to a Compassionate Friends meeting, please muster all of the strength and courage you have and walk in the door for that first meeting. We'll help you from there. We care. We understand. We too have

the same wounds as you. We need not walk alone.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Gifts from Amy

I recently had to take part in the one-year anniversary of my precious daughter Amy's death, a day that we as parents never want to take part in. I was distressed as it really sank in that this was real and very final.

Last year at this time I had been in such a state of shock that now, looking back, I began to realize the daze I was in for several months. This year I was in no such daze—the pain was all too real.

What could I do with this day? How could I make it through? In my pain I remembered one of the first things I had said when Amy died. I had expressed thankfulness for all the things she had taught me by being in my life. As I thought of this now, I began to write down all the many things. Soon I found I was taking my list a step further and listing all the things I had learned since Amy's death, I began to see my list as a list of gifts from Amy.

Before Amy's death I had thought of myself as a religious person, going to church, believing in God, even knowing several Bible verses by heart. I was wrong. I have only now begun to see

(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 only



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

the difference in religious and spiritual. Only now, after Amy's death, have I embarked on my very own spiritual path. What greater gift could my child have left me!

I took my list and put it in a box, wrapped it up and tied it with a bow. I put the box in my closet. This time next year I will open the box and celebrate all the wonderful gifts my daughter has given to me. And I'm sure I will add more as the years go by.

Suzanne Owens

TCF, West Columbia, SC

In Memory of my daughter Amy

Bread Crumbs—Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have. They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice—a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

"Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark"

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest—to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them

I like to think that the return from

grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest—but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you will find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow doesn't come."

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently—and I believe better—than the person that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the "perfect life" or do what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around—from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of "what's in it for me?" to "how can I help you?" We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have

noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We didn't ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: "Could you please come over?" We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?" his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy who broke his bike," the child answered. "But, Honey," the mother said. "You don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know Mom," came the reply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal too.

So, what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "there is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one-third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in Stage Two, we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

Rich Edler

In Memory of my son, Mark

The Good Fight

Before our son's death turned our lives upside down, I cannot recall spending any time in cemeteries. One or two elderly relatives, who had lived out their span, are in cemeteries now, and their loss is felt at holiday gatherings. When I was a child, our Sunday School class took a tour of the pre-Revolutionary cemetery behind the historic old church I attended. I remember being shocked at the number of tiny markers for the very young who, our teacher said, were so susceptible to diseases in those colonial days.

We were simply told that people had large families then because they knew illness would take some of the children. We were never exposed to the notion that this was a tragedy to these real people of so long ago.

Many years later, when my grandmother was in her 80's, she told me that the child born before her died at the age of 3. At the age of 13, Grandmother was stunned to find her mother caressing this child's clothing and weeping in the attic of their home in the rolling hills of Kentucky. I was a parent then and I thought, "Well, of

course Grandmother's mother was sad, but she had other children." I didn't know, did I? Who among us did?

Now when I go to my son's marker, I examine the other headstones carefully. Did everyone in the family live to an acceptable age? When I find one that clearly indicates the death of a child, I study the parent's markers closely. How long did they have to live without their child? Sometimes the number of years takes my breath away. I am to learn from this. Others "made it," so can I. Without Compassionate Friends I wouldn't have had a clue as to HOW they made it, and probably would have given up the effort.

I read the inscriptions on these older markers to see if they provide any clues as to what helped those before me carry on. I found one that summed it up. It read:

"LIVING, YOU MADE IT GOOD-LIER TO LIVE:
DEAD, YOU MAKE IT EASIER TO DIE"

So—we are to endure. We do know what it was to live, but now we have the added dimensions of courage, love and steadfastness. And, though we no longer hope for our own death as a release from the pain, we, unlike most "other people," will not fear it when we have finished fighting the good fight.

*Pat Kuzela,
TCF, Atlanta*

The Beautiful Name of Parent

People often ask why there is not a word for someone who has lost a child. For me the answer is quite simple; I am and always will be a parent. The death of our child does not take that precious title away from any of us. Nothing and no one can ever change the fact that we are parents. We gave life to, nurtured and raised our children, for however long or short their lives were. "Parent" is a living word. It is an eternal word.

Our children would want us to

remember that we are their parents now and forever. They would want the name of "parent" that was bestowed on us at their birth to live on in our hearts. We are still actively parenting our children. We continue to bring life to our children by loving them now and forever. There is not and should never be a word to signify the endless love of a parent.

Janet G. Reyes

TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

Gone So Suddenly

As I laid you down to sleep
I never could have imagined
That you'd never wake up again,
And now I'm broken inside and saddened.

I feel so guilty for your death,
But I don't know what I could have done.
Should I have watched you take every breath,
My precious little one?

I spend my time second-guessing myself,
Although I don't believe you'd want me to.
I miss you so unbelievably much that
I try to listen for a message from you.

I think you'd rather I try to cherish
The short time I had with you,
And wait until we are together again,
When we'll laugh, love and play the day through.

Quiet as a whisper, you silently slipped away.
We thought you were only napping to energize for the day.

But you were sleeping more deeply than anyone can wake.
And now we spend our days missing you and crying for your sake.

For such a sudden loss, there's just no way to prepare.
It's going to take a very long time to accept that you're not there.

Kelly Roper

More On Surviving Siblings

I gained a greater understanding of how powerful guilt can be for surviving siblings observing my son Michel after the death of his sister, Kristen. As parents, it is our role to support, nurture, and protect. This is not the role of siblings, yet it gets twisted into their grief as well. As a result, it is common for brothers and sisters to feel that they failed in some way.

Siblings may often believe there must have been something they could have done to prevent the death. And sadly, it is not uncommon for siblings

to believe they caused the death by wishing ill thoughts on their sister or brother during a disagreement or fight. This can have unfortunate repercussions if the sibling dies. Well-intentioned people may add to the confusion by making statements like, "You need to be strong for your parents," adding an unnecessary burden for the child to now care for us. Michel also heard, "God must have needed Kris-sie." causing him to fear that God may want him too.

Survival guilt is also common. Not only do parents believe they shouldn't outlive their children, but brothers and sisters often feel guilty for being alive and enjoying life. They may believe as well that they need to be the perfect child to make up for the loss. This is a real complication of grief. As parents,

we need to be aware of this and reassure them that they don't need to make up for anything, nor can they. We might want to tell them that the greatest gift they can give us is to be their own person and live life to the fullest.

When death lands on the doorstep of our surviving children at a tender age it most likely becomes their threshold into adulthood for understanding death can demand adult sized answers. I definitely noticed this with my son who was only nine when his sister died suddenly. He became a quieter, more serious boy. The innocence of his childhood was left behind when he realized his sister, his buddy, was gone forever.

Watching our surviving children come to terms with death of this magnitude, I've always felt, is the double-edged sword of the bereaved parent. We are wrestling with our own grief and the endless questions with answers that don't come easily, making us, once again, feel as helpless as we did when our child died. Being open and honest with our children and their struggle and keeping the channels of communication open, can actually bring us closer to them. We can heal together.

Carol Kearns, PhD
Marin County CA



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

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

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 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

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



Livonia Chapter Page

Regular meeting: Thursday, July 6 at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: What bread crumbs did your child leave behind? How has your child’s gifts changed your life during their lifetime or after their death?

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 the last page.

- ♥ Sandi Weisl in memory of Scott; “Happy 53rd birthday Scott. Love you & Miss you. Mom”
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of Tom Jr. & Joe Coffey; “In memory of our son Tom Jr. on his Angel Day 7/15 & Joe Coffey on his Angel Day 7/26.” Also, “In Memory of our sons Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis considered a son to our family and Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey & 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.

Kim and Charles Francis, whose beloved son, ***Daniel Ryan***; born 6/09; died n/a

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

July 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

*“The Grieving are
only time travelers.*

For it takes only

One Song

One Smell

One Sound

One Moment

*And we are suddenly
right back with you.”*

*Be sure to take a look at
the chapter’s new website:
www.tcflivonia.org*