

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



June 2026
Volume 38, Number

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:

June 4th -7:00 pm - Meeting:
see this page for info

June 16th, 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



A Father's Grief

It must be very difficult
To be a man in grief.
Since "men don't cry"
and "men are strong"
No tears can bring relief.
It must be very difficult
To stand up to the test.
And field calls and visitors
So that she can get some rest.
They always ask if she's alright
And what she's going through.
But seldom take his hand and ask,
"My friend, how are you?"
He hears her cry in the night
And thinks his heart will break.
And dries her tears and comforts her
But "stays strong" for her sake.
It must be very difficult
To start each day anew.
And try to be so very brave –
He lost his child too.

Eileen Knight Hagemester

The Graduation Moment

This week graduation ceremonies took place at the school where I work. Just before the program started, the wife on one of our teachers ask me how my son was doing. I had to tell her what happened, without softening the impact, that my son had died. I know she felt like crawling under my desk. Her husband, a teacher on our staff, had the same shocked and embarrassed look on his face. He said to her, "I told you." She replied, "No, you didn't." As they debated the point, I stood there, feeling really strange.

I haven't had anyone ask me that question for a long time The wife kept apologizing. I kept saying it was all right and changed the subject, but even later on, I couldn't stop thinking about the conversation.

Actually, I'm still thinking about it. I can't seem to shake the weird feeling I had and the sound of my voice saying he died. I couldn't sleep at all that night. I kept saying those two words over and over: he died, he died. At two years and four months into my grief, I found myself saying, "I can't believe this really happened."

This sadness and tidal wave of pain sometimes seems to come out of nowhere. It can be just a moment,

(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 for Members Only



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

such as graduation. It takes only one small incident to bring on an immense amount of fresh grief. You may spend a few days or weeks or months feeling okay, and then it hits, without warning, without mercy. This unsuspected grief makes you feel like you are back at the beginning again, even though you know you have made progress. Others see you as adjusted and “going on” with your life, so you keep your feelings inside. Sometimes it seems that the more time that passes, the more feelings we keep inside.

Others don't know the storm raging inside of us at these times. They don't know that there will always be some clouds, even when the storm is over.

The tidal wave that hits me on graduation night is still pounding at my heart. The constant choking back of tears, the questions, and the anger are all part of the grief that impacts at these moments. I bought a card with those words, “I miss you all of the time, but some days I feel it more than others. Like today, Graduation Day.”

*Cindy Fisher,
TCF, Fairfield, OH*

Vulnerable

I have found in the years that have passed that I am most vulnerable at times of remembrance.

The word “Anniversary” no longer holds a promise of celebration. Instead, holidays and birthdays, family gatherings and otherwise joyous occasions contain an undertow of sorrow. If I get caught up in it, I quickly get pulled under and wind up gasping for breath. It is ironic that the presence of the absence can be so emotionally devastating.

You'll excuse me if the bounce is gone from my step. Or the depth of my laughter has changed.

Issues that were once monumental, now seem insignificant. Please

excuse me if I don't commiserate that your car needs repair or the faucet leaks. My focus on life has forever changed.

You'll excuse me if my spirit seems lost during holidays of any kind. They are now days “to bear”, rather than days to share and enjoy.

You'll pardon me if I bring you down or make you feel discomfort, and I'll pardon you for not understanding that my life will never be the same; that although I'll survive, there will always be sorrow.

*Joan Fischer,
TCF Nassau County Chapter, NY*

Summer Days,

No one can really give us the comfort we crave that could only be achieved by getting our Chelsea back. There is nothing we want more than to hold Chelsea in our arms: to hug her, to kiss her, and to hear her sweet voice again. However, I found some solace in completing a project she started months before her passing. On our inner yard fence, she had begun painting flowers on the fence boards adding color and décor to our backyard. Summer soon got hot, and we suggested giving it a break. But before she could resume the project, she had passed. Following the shock and turmoil of this horrible event, I had it in the back of my mind of returning to her project. But the thought of it would break me down in tears. I put it aside, but soon I continued to ponder it.

And finally, I built the courage to face the challenge of completing Chelsea's project. I gathered paints, brushes, and sketches. I knew what I needed to do, but I knew it needed one thing that was not in the original plans. Besides the floral designs she had painted on the fence, it now called for butterflies! So, I got started. The first attempts were devastating; brush in hand, I would just look at the fence and start crying. So, I would have to pack it up. But I knew I wanted to do this more than

anything to honor our Chelsea. I knew we could look at the finished project and reflect that this is what Chelsea would have done had she been here. So, I pushed on continuing the project with tears flowing from my eyes, and salty sweat burning my eyes so severely that I had to continually wipe them.

The heat was intense, the sun was beating on the back of my neck, but I was feeling accomplishment in the project. I couldn't stop. I just couldn't put the brushes down. Days passed, and those days turned to months, as I would add to it day after day. It was growing bigger and bigger, covering the full-back fence and the side fence as well. The butterflies and flowers were blending together in a beautiful orchestration of harmony. I knew this little girl, and I knew how she would draw. Her expressions of art were flowing through me with such vibrance that I could feel her in every stroke. It was indeed a labor of love for the child I loved so much. I know she is looking at that fence. I know she was part of it. I think I have honored her in a way only I could. I love you, Chelsea.

There are many different ways of coping with the loss of a loved one, such as in memorial functions, lighting a candle, reading books, writing letters or journals, or even planting a garden. All of these can be part of the healing process but never of forgetting the love of your deceased child.

*Millie Hunton,
Co-Leader, TCF Greater New Orleans*

A Grieving Father carries his love and his loss every day. Even when the world doesn't see his pain, it is there. If you are that father, your grief is real, your love is forever, and your healing matters. You are not alone.

Grieving Fathers are often expected to be the strong ones, the ones who hold everything together while their world is falling apart. But fa-

thers grieve too. They feel the weight of their loss in every quiet moment, in every unspoken dream, in the space where their child should be. If you're a grieving father, your pain is real, and your grief deserves it's attention. You don't have to carry it alone. Whether through talking, writing, remembering or simply allowing yourself to feel, your grief matters. Your love for your child remains, always. To all the Fathers carrying the unimaginable loss, you are not alone.

Gratitude - The Key to Happiness

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I did not come upon this insight. I learned it from Dennis Prager, a wonderful and gifted man who is both author and talk show host for KNBC radio in Los Angeles. I give him all the credit. But I have thought a lot about this idea after my son, Mark, died five years ago tomorrow.

At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during The Compassionate Friends meetings. These were the people who seemed to have somehow reentered the land of the living. How dare they greet each other with hugs. How dare they laugh. How dare they appear normal when their children have died. But over the last five years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that is 11:00 in the morning and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt. But then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget. But we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life. We choose to enjoy friends again. We

choose to go out to dinner again. We choose to laugh again. I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us. The pain does not bring our child back. It only makes us miserable without end.

- Become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter meetings who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" and want no part of life again. But, I ask that these compassionate friends also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family, a career they enjoy, financial security, life in a free country, a faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse who they love. Nobody has it all. But compared to most of the world, we have a lot.

- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived, and we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel."

And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten. Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Richard Edler

TCF South Bay/LA. CA

In Memory of my son Mark Edler

Time Heals?

They say time helps you to accept what's happened. But when it comes to the death of a child, time doesn't

work the way people think it does. For many bereaved parents, it can take years, sometimes a lifetime to even begin to face the full reality of that loss. We still expect to hear their footsteps. We glance at the front door and imagine it opening. We pass their room and whisper a prayer: Please, let them be in there. Just this once.

It's not denial. It's love refusing to let go of what should have been. Because losing a child isn't just heart-breaking ~ it's unnatural. It goes against every instinct we have. We were meant to protect them, raise them, and watch them grow into the best person imagined. And when that future is taken, our hearts don't just grieve ~ we struggle to understand how the world can still go on.

Grief like this doesn't follow a timeline. It's not something to be "gotten over". It's something we carry ~ gently, painfully ~ for the rest of our lives. So, if you're still waiting to truly accept what happened... you're not alone.

You're not broken.

You are a parent who loves beyond all reason, beyond all time. And the love ~ as painful as it is to carry, it is also something sacred.

I Know Where You Are
3 years ago, you left this earth
but I know where you are.
You are in my heart, in my breath.
You are in every part of my day.
You are in my dreams and my thoughts.

I know one day I will see you again
and, oh! what a day that will be.
We can laugh with each other
again,
and cry with each other again.
I may have to suffer many years
before that glorious day.
But, for now, it gives me hope.

For now

I know where you are.

Debbie Trepanier

SIBS

A Journey to the “New Normal”

May 31 marked seven years since my only sibling Dave died from cancer at age 32. This June 28 we would have been celebrating Dave’s 40th birthday with a big party, and I’d be kidding him about going bald, just like all the Snapp men before him. Instead, I’ll be getting ready for the TCF National Conference, at which I’ll share memories of his brilliance, great smile, and sense of humor with those who will never have the pleasure of meeting him in person.

At this point in my grief journey, most will be good memories of how Dave lived, rather than bad memo-

ries of how he died. I can’t recall the moment when that shift of perspective occurred, but I would like to share a few memories and milestones that have marked the way:

- Months after Dave died, I went to see the movie “Big”, starring Tom Hanks, and “lost it” when his mother stared out the window wondering if she’d ever see him again. I watched the movie again recently and didn’t lose it.

- It was three months before I felt up to sharing with anyone the details of the day my brother died at his home in Bellevue, Washington, in the company of Mom, Dad, and me. On the way home from that emotional conversation, I drove the wrong way down a one way street in downtown Chicago – it might be smart to have a friend drive you to

your first few TCF meetings!

- I discovered that the grief path is not a straight line. A few good days can be followed by several bad ones. I’ve heard other TCF members call this their “roller coaster ride.”

- For a year, I couldn’t keep the radio on if “Wind Beneath My Wings” came on. For the next year, I kept it on but cried through it. Now, I can usually make it all the way through without any tears!

- With the help of TCF, I realized that despite friends expecting it to be possible, I’d never be “back to normal.” My focus instead shifted to finding my “new normal”. While I can’t point to a time when that happened (probably after the 1990 TCF Conference), THAT was a milestone.

- For three Christmases after Dave died, I didn’t put up a tree in my condo. For Christmas, 1991, as I was getting out ornaments for my first tree since his death, I came across a bunch of ornaments that he had had in his apartment. I came totally unglued then, but now I look forward to seeing those ornaments each Christmas.

- It was three years before I felt that I had enough emotional energy to pursue a relationship. Even now, I don’t have a lot of tolerance for guys I go out with that gripe about their brothers or sisters.

My most vivid “landmark” to date along my grief journey came in February 1993. Following my Dad’s father’s death in December, 1992, we were in Atlanta cleaning out my grandfather’s apartment, and I came across a pile of post cards and letters that Dave had written to my grandparents through the years. Earlier in my journey, a “blind side” such as

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

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, June 4th. at 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables. Topic Table: When do you feel the most vulnerable with your grief? What are the triggers for your grief?

Let Us Celebrate Their Births



RIBBON CEREMONY 2026

Bent But Not Broken

The beautiful flowering tree planted in Nina's memory on Memorial Day a year short of a decade ago (by her favorite cousins) looked so regal and smelled so delicious yesterday. I like to think it flowers this time of year as a special birthday message from my "baby girl". However, with the vicious storm we had last evening I watched the soft white petals drift and swirl to the ground, as if a deluge of tears from a breaking heart. Today, it sits almost bare - a few petals still hanging on for dear life, unable to let go, desperate to regain its former beauty.

I can't help but see a symbolism in that tree that I can associate

with. It is as if it stands as a monument to my grief, the ebb and flow of emotions that I have felt for the past nine years since Nina no longer walks this earth. When the tree is in full flower it seems much like family life "before".

Of course there were short-term crises that now seem insignificant in comparison and life's speed bumps along the way, but all in all, pretty good. I mean, at least our family was intact. When the leaves were suddenly stripped of their branches and thrown to the ground in the furious hail-storm, it was like our lives after Nina's sudden death; thrown suddenly into a world of intense pain and sorrow, trying desperately to survive the unthinkable.

But, yet this morning, the tree

stands, more barren and most definitely battered, but still hanging in there. Nine years later, those who love her, have weathered the tornado-like force of grief and loss. And nine years later, much like Nina's tree, though the storm has taken its toll, we will still manage to be upright; definitely bent, but still standing. And somehow, life roars on...

With gentle thoughts

Cathy L. Seehuetter

TCF St. Paul, MN

In Memory of my daughter, Nina

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

June 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

that would have sent me into a tailspin. In this case, though, my immediate reaction was one of happiness, for I had found a part of Dave that I didn't know I still had! I saved a few of the post cards, sent a couple to my cousin who was referenced in some of the letters, and (amazingly) threw the rest away. It was fun to share the memories, but I didn't feel the need to hang onto them. It was at that point, nearly five years after Dave's death, that I truly felt as if I was closing in on that "new normal."

Karen Snepp