

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**June 2023**  
**Volume 35, Number 6**

**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:**

**June 1** - Monthly Chapter  
Meeting see page 7

**June 20- 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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### *I Heard My Father Cry*

Feeling so helpless and sad,  
listening from the room next door,  
over my ears using every pillow I had,  
I couldn't take it any more.

His pain came from inside,  
cries turned into screams,  
what he felt he could no longer hide,  
the loss of his only son took away his  
dreams.

His sighs echoed off the walls,  
he couldn't seem to pull himself to-  
gether,  
as our eyes met at the end of the hall,  
I realized his hurt will be with him  
forever.

With eyes so sad, he looked right  
through me,  
not knowing what to say,  
I didn't even try.

This is something I never expected to  
see,  
but now I know that real men do cry.

*Karen Keck,  
TCF, Sacramento Valley*

### *A Graduation Moment*

This week graduation ceremonies  
took place at the school where I work.  
Just before the program started, the  
wife of 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,  
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

*(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**

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
--------------	-------------------------------------	-------------	------------

*Available for newsletter recipients.*



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

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*

## Remembering the Laughter

A few days ago I was in a store, and a one-year-old boy started laughing. At first he giggled, then he let the pure joy of life take him, and he started laughing uncontrollably. Magically, he got the hiccups which caused him to laugh even more. As I listened to this happy child, laughing for the joy of life, I felt a tear of happiness roll down my cheek. The sheer joy and laughter of this child reminded me of another time and another place when my son would laugh uncontrollably.

Todd was a happy baby, and a happier toddler. As a baby he grinned at me each time I caught his eye. If I continued to look at him and smile or make a silly noise, he would start laughing. He'd laugh uncontrollably. My Irish grandmother told me that Todd smiled in his sleep because he could still see the angels. I'll never forget that.

As Todd grew older, his happy disposition became one of his most endearing qualities. When he was three he started laughing with other children. He was so happy at that pre-school that when he was ready for first grade, he didn't want to leave. "What if I can't laugh and smile in first grade, Mom?" he asked one day. I told him that he would have to pick and choose the times to laugh and smile. But the payoff, I told him, was that he was going to learn to read big boy books. He was so happy about that possibil-

ity that he quietly smiled all the way home.

By the end of second grade, Todd had learned to control the giggles and laughter. But he was always ready with a quick smile and that special look of joy in his eyes. As he got older, he lost some of that luster. Life does that. It saddened me to see so much seriousness in my child. I asked him one day if he was unhappy. "No, I'm happy," he said. "It's just that a lot of people don't like that."

That was when we had "the talk." I explained that the expectations of others were not important. I went into great detail about who he inherently was and why he must cling to that with everything he had. He seemed to understand. He was now in fourth grade, and teachers, principals, teachers' aids and friends' parents would occasionally try to impress upon him how serious life was. "Enjoy it," I told him. And he did.

The next day he took off a tennis shoe and threw it through the transom above the classroom door. His teacher was not amused. She called me. I said I would talk to him. That evening I asked him what possessed him to throw his tennis shoe through the open transom. I wasn't angry; I was curious. "Well, mom, you know how it is when something pops into your head and the more you think about it, the funnier it gets?" I said that I'd experienced that more than a few times in my life. "Well, that's what happened. I looked at the window above the door, and I looked at my tennis shoe. I started feeling really tickly in my stomach. I had to do it, Mom. I just had to do it. It was so funny. I laughed and laughed. The teacher got mad. But she gets mad if we're all just sitting there. I smiled all day. I'm still smiling. You said I should be myself. She's going to quit teaching this year. She doesn't really like kids.

"Do you think you might have helped that process along?" I asked. "No, she told us in September. I'm always nice to her. I'm never rude.

That explained why she was so sur-

prised that Todd would do this. He was such a gentle, kind child. I knew this teacher. She was a bit odd. As it turned out, she left teaching at the end of that year. There was a lot more going on with her than one tennis shoe through a transom.

"You told me to hang on to who I am. That's who I am, Mom. I'm not the class clown. I'm just happy." Another moment for "the talk", I thought. No, I'm going to share my son's happiness. I asked how he knew that he could get the shoe through the transom. "Oh, I 'visioned' it", he said. "Just like you said... 'vision' it and you can do it." I told him not to disrupt the class again, and he agreed that he wouldn't. The teacher was pleased that the behavior had been addressed. That was that.

Years later, I asked him what he remembered about fourth grade. The shoe through the Transom and the teacher who quit were his memories of that year. I asked if he still got that tickly feeling in his stomach as an adult. With a smile on his face and eyes that quickened my heart, he said, "Sure, Mom. Don't you?"

Yes, I still do. And I am so glad that my baby boy was able to laugh for 35 years, even on the last day of his life. The angels are surely smiling now with Todd in their presence. How could they not?

And on your birthday this month, it is your laughter that I will remember and treasure as we mark the day with stories and joy and a few tears.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX*

## Chasing After Closure

I keep reading in the newspapers about survivors of tragedy or death seeking "Closure." Yet no one really defines what closure means, whether it is possible or how to get there. For many in our society, closure means leaving grief behind, a milestone usually expected within a matter of weeks or months. Closure means being "normal," getting back to your old self, no longer crying or being affected by the

death. It means “moving on with life” and leaving the past behind, even to the extent of forgetting or ignoring it. For we who have experienced death, this kind of closure is not only impossible but indeed undesirable. Closure, if one even chooses to use the term, is actually more a process than a defined moment. The initial part of closure is accepting the reality. At first, we keep hoping or wishing that it weren’t true. We expect our loved one to walk through the door. We wait for someone to tell us it was all a huge mistake. We just can’t accept that this person has died, that we will never physically see them again on earth, that we will not hear their voices, feel their hugs, or get their input on a tough decision. Usually it takes weeks or even months for the reality to finally sink in. We come to know, in both our heads and our hearts that our loved one has died and is not coming back. We still don’t like it, but we accept it as true. As the reality sinks in, we can more actively heal. We begin making decisions and start to envision a life different from what we had planned before, a life in which we no longer expect our loved one to be there. We grow, struggle, cry and change. We form fresh goals; we face our loneliness; we feel the pain and loss, but except for short periods of time, we are not crippled by it. We also make a shift in memory, memories of our loved ones, rather than being painful as they were at first, sometimes make us smile or even laugh. This healing phase takes a very long time and involves a lot of back-and-forth. We alternate between tears of joy, fears and confidence, despair and hope. We take two steps forward and one step back. We wonder whether we’ll ever be truly happy again, and often doubt that we will. Eventually we realize we are taking the past, with all its pain and pleasure, into a new tomorrow. We never forget, and in fact we carry our beloved with us; he or she is forever a cherished part of who we are. We are changed by the experience of having loved this person, by the knowledge of life’s transience, and

by grief itself. We become different and hopefully better, more compassionate, more appreciative and more tolerant people. We fully embrace life again, connecting, laughing and loving with a full heart. Still, there is no point of “final closure,” no point at which we can say, “Ah, now I have finally completed my grief.” Or, “Yes, now I have healed.” There is no point at which we will never cry again, although as time goes on the tears are bittersweet and less common. Healing is a lifelong process; one in which we often don’t even realize we are healing until we look back and see how far we have come. “Closure?” I don’t think so; acceptance, yes; peace, yes; hope, definitely; but putting a period behind the final sentence and closing the book on it? No! Life and love are much too complex for that. The story does not end; instead it awaits the next chapter.

Amy Florian,  
*Hoffman Estates, IL*

## My Old Friend Grief

My old friend Grief is back. He comes to visit me once in a while to remind me that I am still a broken man. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely, I have adjusted to a world without him. But the truth is we never completely heal, we never totally adjust. Such is the nature of loss that no matter how much life has been experienced, the heart of the bereaved will never be the same. It is as though a part of us also dies with the person we lose through death. We will be all right, but we will never be the same.

And so my old friend Grief drops in to say hello. Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. I’ll hear a certain song or smell a certain fragrance; I’ll look at certain pictures and I’ll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

One may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet the opposite is true. *Grief revisited* is *Grief acknowledged*, and *Grief*

*confronted* is *Grief resolved*. But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a sense of loss on anniversaries and holidays and even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting and because moving on with life does not mean that we don’t take a part of our lost love with us. Of course, the intensity of the pain decreases over time if we allow grief to visit us from time to time. But if the intensity remains or if our life is still dysfunctional years after our loss, we are stuck and in need of professional help to get unstuck.

Sometimes my old Grief sneaks up on me. I’ll feel an unexplained but profound sadness that clings to me for days. Then I’ll recognize the Grief and cry a little, and then I can go on. It’s as though the ones we have lost are determined not to be forgotten.

My old friend Grief doesn’t get in the way of living; he just wants to come along and chat sometimes. Grief has taught me a few things about living that I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or risk emotional paralysis. Old Grief has taught me that I can survive even great loss, and although my world is different, it is still my world, and I must live in it. He has taught me that when I let go, I can flourish again in season and bring forth the good fruit that comes not in spite of my loss, but because of it.

My old friend Grief has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love. Love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death. My old friend Grief may leave me for a while, but he’ll be back again to remind me to confront my new reality and to gain through loss and pain.

*Adolfo Quezada TCF, Grand Junction, CO*  
“I have already been through hell, so give it your best shot. Not only will I survive, I will win!”

## SIBS

### What Of The One Who Comes After?

What of the one who comes after,  
The one who's born at the last?  
What does he know of your presence?  
What does he know of your past?  
He knows not of your place in this world.  
He knows not of our heart's home for you.  
He simply knows your name's spoken  
Among tears, if now only a few.  
We'll tell him of days in your midst  
When joy was the order of the day.  
We'll tell him of your short life here.  
We'll love him the very same way.  
Although you two shall not meet

In this life or where I can see.  
Your bond, though invisible, is strong.  
And brothers you always will be.  
What of the one who comes after,  
The one who's born at the last?  
Now he shall know of your presence.  
Now he shall know of your past.

*Janie French*

*TCF, Carrollton-Farmers, TX*

### Dreamy Memories

Beckoning, dreamy memories  
Call softly out to me,  
Taking me back through the years  
To the way it used to be.  
Carefree and happy was our Brad,  
The world was his shining toy,  
Sunny days and summer nights  
Two favorites of his joy.

He floated, drifting with the tide,  
Never knowing care or sorrow,  
Living each day as it came,  
With no thoughts of tomorrow.  
I shed a tear for him today,  
My heart called out his name.  
I longed to hold him in my arms  
For a touch that never came.  
I closed my eyes to see his face  
And hoped to see his smile.  
I waited to hear him say to me,  
"I'll be back in just a while."  
And then my eyes, so filled with fear,  
My heart, so filled with pain,  
Came back to see he wasn't here—  
My wishes were in vain.  
Wistfully my mind returns  
To the present day again.  
I find in pleasant sweet surprise,  
His soul still lives within.  
Though he may not be here now  
In a body we can touch,  
His memory will grow each day—  
In our hearts that means so much.  
So now I'll say the time will come  
When we will be together again.  
Until that day no good-byes we'll say,  
Just "We love you. God bless."

*Debbie Sadler Brown,  
TCF/ Nashville, TN*

### 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](http://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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

**Ann Arbor:** Mike Fedel: [MikeFedela2@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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  
Sibs 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, June 1 at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: Do you have a favorite picture or something that reminds you so much of your child? What is it and why? You might want to bring it to the meeting to share.

---

**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.

- ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens in memory of Justin; “Wishing our son Justin a Heavenly 46th Birthday.  
Miss you so very much! Love You, Mom & Matt”
  - ♥ Valerie Weatherly in memory of Kelli Weatherly; “Our Own “Special K” God blessed us with you.  
Your brother, family and friends & mom love and miss you so much! Thanks for all you do ♥
- 

## 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.*

Yvette Warren, whose beloved son, **Kenneth Carter** born 7/05; died 1/05; 42 years

Angela Webster, whose beloved, son, **Jacob Berens**, born 1/15 ; died 11/27, 19 years

Angela Webster, whose beloved son, **Dylan Witt**, born 8/27; died 12/08; 10 years

---

## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

---

### 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*

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

## **June 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: \_\_\_\_\_

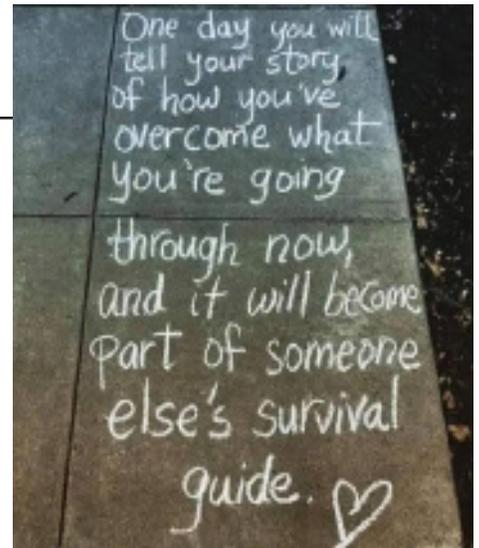
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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



***Be sure to take a look at  
the chapter's new website:  
[www.tcflivonia.org](http://www.tcflivonia.org)***