

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**June 2025**  
**Volume 37, Number 6**

**The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.**

### **Chapter Leader**

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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 5th -7:00 pm - Meeting**  
*see page 7*

**June 17th, 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.***

***July 11 - 13: 48th National Confer-***  
***ence of Compassionate Friends.***

***Seattle, WA***

***<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>***

### **Father**

When we use the name father, several thoughts automatically come to mind. Strong. Protector. Problem solver. Guardian. Wise. Open arms. Tender. Loving. Forgiving. Always there. A father takes great pride in living up to these expectations. In fact, you can watch most any father's posture change to reflect the characteristics of being the strong one, the leader, and the fixer of problems for his children.

When a child dies, a father's world is turned upside down. Losing a child is something that nobody can fix – not even a father. There is a sense of failure and guilt that washes over a father time and time again. He no longer feels like he is the glue that holds the family together. A father experiences many different emotions when his child dies, but he is very seldom able to verbally express those emotions.

Men grieve quite differently than women. This is a fact that we now acknowledge, yet in society we tend to question a father in grief if he does not openly talk about his loss and pain. Verbalization of emotions is a difficult thing to do for most men, especially for a father that has lost his child.

When Father's Day approaches, there are many feelings of loss and failure that are experienced. Pictures

of fathers interacting with their happy, healthy children are found everywhere— in stores, on television, in magazines, and in the newspaper. Most churches give special lessons dedicated to fathers, but very little recognition is ever given to the father that has gone through child loss.

By planning ahead for the difficult emotions of Father's Day, a father can cope much better. Plan a project such as planting a flower garden in memory of your child. Build a memorial bench and stencil your child's name on it. Write a letter to your child expressing your thoughts, then release the letter with a balloon.

Above all else, remember that you will always be a father! Be especially kind to yourself as you prepare for the array of emotions you will experience on Father's Day. As you work through these feelings of loss, you are taking steps forward towards healing in this difficult journey we call grief!

### **A Father: on "getting over it"**

"You'll get over it." If you're a parent who has experienced a loss, you know all too well the pain of those well-intentioned words. It's not surprising that others say that to us. I mean, I didn't get it myself for a long time. I remember the first time it dawned on me that my son's death, and the grief we were experiencing, was not going to be a brief

*(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>
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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*

“phase” of our lives.

We were at a support group of parents who had experienced miscarriage, stillbirth and infant loss. Simon had just died two weeks prior, and his death was so fresh in our minds that when one mother began telling her story and merely describing walking through the hospital, my wife and I began shaking and crying. As she told her story, choked with intermittent sobs, she concluded by saying, “Today is the 6 month anniversary.” My wife and I—eyes a little wide—looked at each other surprised that her emotion we saw was so raw after such a “long” period. But then, another parent spoke up, talking about the pain of watching students in her neighborhood preparing to graduate from high school. Breaking down into tears, she cried, “My son died 18 years ago this month.... He should be with them....”

It feels foolish to write this now, but I remember sitting in the car after that meeting, surprised and scared at the sheer vastness of time that had just opened up before us. This would not be a spike of pain followed by a brief tail of sadness.

But, having someone tell you something and then actually internalizing it is not that same thing. In those first few months, I still had it in my mind that, eventually, we would “get over it.” Half a year later, we were still sad and I was looking for answers. Talking to another dad, I asked, “When does it stop feeling like this. Like, how long did it take before you had the first day when you realized that you hadn’t thought about your son yet that day, because—you know—things were starting to heal a bit?”

He looked down and paused for a long time, then talked into his pint of beer: “It’s been over seven years, and he’s still the first thing I think of every day. I don’t think it’s like other things—like a breakup or a friend who’s gone, where you just sort of mentally move on. He’s always there.”

I shouldn’t have been, but I was—again—blown away by the magnitude

of all of this. How could it hurt for that long? It just didn’t make sense. I had it in my mind that you could “get over” this tragedy, and that we—especially me—were failing to do so. I would get frustrated with myself for not moving on quickly enough, and had to fight the urge to not get frustrated with my wife for continuing to “let” sadness run our lives.

I reached out to one final father for advice, a friend who had been a mentor and boss to me. He lost his daughter when she was three, holding her in his arms as the brain tumor finally stole her last breath. I asked him, “What did you do to get over it? Did you find any books that had good advice or stumble upon any activities you could do to speed up the process of feeling better? I feel like I’m not doing enough, or I’m not doing the right things.”

He thought about it for a minute, quietly searching for the right words. He finally broke the silence: “You know, you don’t really get over it, or speed it up. It’s going to take as long as it’ll take. It’s more about how you live with it.”

In that conversation, it finally clicked for me. You live through the pain; you live through the hurt; you live through loss. It’s more about finding ways to cope with this new thing rather than “getting over it.” It took a long time before I realized that it’s not about getting back to my old life; it’s about adapting (and accepting) this new one. It took a long time before I realized that I’m not failing if I’m not “getting over” this or immediately getting better. It took a long time before I realized that it’s going to take a long time. And that it’s not going to be the same. And that’s ok..

*Andy Gillette from stillstandingmag.com*

## Graduation Time Once Again

Since Trina’s death, we have tried to “stand tall” and attend the sweet sixteen parties, the graduations, the

weddings of our nieces, nephews and friends’ children, and to celebrate and take joy in the birth of our friends’ grandchildren. We took heart in knowing that Trina would have been excited by all these events, because she loved all of these people. We gathered our strength from knowing that Trina would have wanted us to share in their happiness.

Yes, at times there was anxiety beforehand and we shed tears during the various ceremonies, but always we managed to “get through” and even enjoy ourselves.

It’s been almost four years since her death. Why then, could we not attend the high school graduation of her class in June? Why were we so totally overwhelmed? Desperately, we tried to steel ourselves to make an appearance. But we could not. I was even a bit disappointed in myself until our younger daughter said, “Mom, some things hurt too much. Why should we give ourselves more pain?”

It occurred to me then, that she had included herself in that statement. She was telling me she, too, still hurt. So many times this child has spared us more anguish by silently bearing the pain and going with us to all these events.

Then I recalled what I have heard time and time again from my friends at bereavement support group meetings: there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Do what is best for you and your family. Do what you must to endure. We bereaved parents learn that each moment is different, and so our reactions are different as well. What we are unable to do today, we may do tomorrow. I realize now that it is not a sign of weakness – but of strength – to accept our own limitations.

*Mary Sullivan,  
TCF, Central CT*

## What Grieving People Want You to Know

- I am not strong. I’m just numb. When you tell me I am strong, I feel that you don’t see me.

- I will not recover. This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one and rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is part of me and always will be, and sometimes I will remember him with joy and other times with a tear. Both are okay.

- I don't have to accept the death. Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.

- Please don't avoid me. You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be cared about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arm, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."

- Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything." I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have. So, in advance, let me give you some ideas:

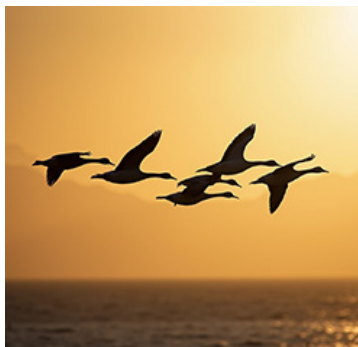
- Bring food.

- Offer to take my children to a movie or game so that I have some moments to myself.

- Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of the death, and be sure to mention her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them, because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day.

- Ask me more than once to join you at a movie or lunch or dinner. I may say no at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up, then I really will be alone.

Virginia A. Simpson



## Snow Geese

A sign of changing seasons in the USA are large flocks of honking geese migrating from the chill of Greenland, Alaska and Siberia to the warmth of Mexico. What beautiful and amazing birds. Watching them one could imagine being in a snow globe or snowstorm. The cacophony of honking as they fly is to encourage their leaders and each other to keep going.

They are seen travelling in a "V" formation for several reasons:

- It reduces the drag and buffeting of the wind.

- It conserves each bird's energy on their long journey.

- It minimises the risk of collision and injury.

- It enables them to keep track of each other.

- Each goose creates uplift for those following.

- The geese also change positions in the flight formation to prevent fatigue so the leaders get a rest.

- If one bird gets sick or wounded, two geese will drop out of the "V" formation to help and encourage it to keep going.

What a perfect example of care, teamwork, communication, visual contact and co-operation.

I couldn't help thinking about us in The Compassionate Friends. We are 'migrating' on a long grief journey and we should travel together in formation, keeping track of each other, encouraging each other, thus helping to reduce the buffeting of grief. We need to 'honk' and encourage each other to keep going and support

those who 'drop out'.

*If you have never read the charming simple story The snow goose by Paul Gallico try and get hold of a copy. It is a lovely read – a bit of a tear jerker. The story of a solitary artist, a young girl and an injured snow goose set in 1941 at the time of Dunkirk.*

Keren Marsh, Wanganui

## Permission to Grieve

I was only 10 years old the first time I was introduced to death. Both of my grandparents and my dad's best friend died within weeks of each other. My memories surrounding their deaths were very clinical. It was treated simply as a part of life. No crying (at least not publically), no grieving, no display of loss. They died, were buried and not mentioned again.

When I was 22, my only brother was shot and killed, leaving behind a wife and 5 young children. I know my mother was grief stricken, but once the funeral was over so were the tears. She very carefully hid her pain. Again, my brother was not talked about or his death discussed. When I look back now, I realize I had quite a struggle with handling my grief. Although I didn't know I was grieving, it came out in erratic behavior. It finally resulted in a divorce from my first husband and a total division of my family.

At the age of forty-one, my 19 year old son completed suicide, and again I was faced with grief. This time there was no escaping it. I went immediately to my own mother, knowing she had to understand - after all she had lost her only son. But what I got was correction and scolding. I had not even buried my son when I was told to "stop crying!" "You need to straighten up." "You're only making yourself sick." "You need to cut it out." "This is what Richie wanted to do; you can't change it, so forget it."

I think everyone around me wanted to act as if nothing had happened and just go on with their lives. But this time I couldn't. No one wanted me to cry. My husband would let me if I

(continued on page 7)



# SIBS

## What They Don't Tell You *Inspired by TCF Sibbs and TCF family members who lost a loved one to suicide.*

They don't tell you that there aren't five stages of grief, but an infinite amount that you revisit on a minute-by-minute basis, and then go back. They don't tell you about all the group chats. They don't tell you that you will relive the night you found your daughter's lifeless body every single day. They don't tell you that your schedule changes to hear your brother's truck pull in the driveway. Or that explaining death to a four-year-old without scaring him is nearly impossible. They don't tell you that the greatest reminders that you are living in grief happen when you're

driving, or making dinner. They don't tell you that everyone is afraid to say your loved one's name, or share memories, or pictures. They don't tell you that your blood boils when people joke about suicide. They don't tell you it will take months for the physical symptoms of grief to subside. Or that your mother quite literally loses it when she can't get ahold of you. They don't tell you that your new joys also bring the worst pain. They don't tell you about all the ridiculous assumptions made. They don't tell you that you will begin to question and even doubt everything that you once believed in. They don't tell you that people will roll their eyes when you mention him because they are tired of reminders and want you to "move on." Or that family and friends will step into the shadows and not know how to support you when you need it most.

They don't tell you that when you see his name carved in stone it's that 1st day without him all over again. They don't tell you that a part of you dies inside because you will never take another picture of them. They don't tell you that you will only remember things in the time frame of before they died and after they died. They don't tell you that you will struggle every single day to survive. Or that you will never be the person you were before and you have to learn to be a different version of yourself. They don't tell you that even the littlest things can break you and bring you to tears. They don't tell you that you will flinch every time someone says, "hang in there." They don't tell you you'll feel guilty when you laugh. They don't tell you that your grief would become stronger and deeper as time would pass. Or that you will never be able to open a random door again. They don't tell you that you're going to scream at the top of your lungs "I WANT HIM BACK!"

*Tiana Schwandt,  
TCF Sibling Group,  
Minneapolis, MN*

*Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.*

*-- Earl Grollman*



## 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

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](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; 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



## 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

Meeting is Thursday, June 5th. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: Can you agree with or add to the list of ***What They Don't Tell You?***

\*\*\*\* If any of you who are having the newsletter mailed to you would be willing to receive it online, we would appreciate it. The cost of postage and printing has continued to go up. Just email Brenda at [brendabrummel@me.com](mailto:brendabrummel@me.com)

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***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 back page.

- ♥ Sandra Weiss in loving memory of **Scott Weiss**: "Happy 55th B-Day Scott. Love and miss you.  
Love you forever, Mom"
  - ♥ Susan Steinberg in loving memory of **Shannon**: "Shannon you have been gone from us for 10 yrs now.  
We will miss you forever-the love & beauty in our lives. Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris & Ajax"
- 

## 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.*

Terri Schreur, whose beloved son, **Shawn**, born 5/20; died 3/18; 33 years

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## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

went into another room. My children couldn't handle being around me as I was too depressing.

The only person that gave me "permission" was my 8 year old son, Gene. He would not only talk about his big brother but would remind me at Easter to put colored eggs on his grave. When Ritchie's birthday came around that first year after his death, Gene told me I had to make Ritchie a birthday cake. At Christmas, Gene reminded me to hang up Ritchie's stocking. Gene also felt the importance of "owning" his big brother's possessions. Even now, 5 years later, Ritchie's sports' trophies, baseball and matchbox cars are proudly on display in Gene's room. Gene did not show his grief in sadness - he showed love in remembrance of his brother.

I grieved silently and alone for 3 years before I realized I needed help. It was a counsellor at the Christian Counselling Centre that finally told me "I'm giving you permission to grieve."

It's ok to cry in front of people - it still hurts. It's ok to miss my son - I love him. It's ok to forgive myself - it wasn't my fault. It's ok to ask for help - we all need compassion.

Don't be sorry that others are uncomfortable with your grief. That's their problem they don't understand because it has not happened to them. Be forgiving of others but most of all yourself.

I'm giving you permission to grieve. Go ahead and cry. "If the eyes have no tears, the soul has no rainbow."

*Carol Helmingler, Reprinted*

## Why Butterflies?

Since the early centuries, the butterfly has symbolized renewed life.

The caterpillar signifies life here on earth; the cocoon, death; and the butterfly, the emergence of the dead into a new, beautiful and freer existence. Frequently, the butterfly is seen with the word "Nika", which means victory. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross movingly tells of seeing butterflies drawn all over the walls of the children's dormitories in the World War II concentration camps. Since Elisabeth believes in the innate intuitiveness of children, she concludes that these children knew their fate and were leaving us a message. Many members of The Compassionate Friends embrace the butterfly as a symbol--a sign of hope to them that their children are living in another dimension with greater beauty and freedom - a comforting thought to many.

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

***June 2025***

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



*"A Life may last for just a moment... but memory can make that moment last forever..."*  
*--Author unknown*