

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



June 2024
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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:

June 6 - Monthly Chapter Meeting
see page 7

**June 18 at 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 meeting this month

**PLEASE NOTE: There will not be a
meeting in July.**

**National Conference, New Orleans,
July 12-14**

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

REMINDER

There will not be a meeting
in July due to the meeting
date being July 4th.

Father's Day

Every father believes in his role as protector of his family. He has been assigned the job of fixer and problem solver. He has been told since his youngest days that he must be strong — must not cry. But each father among us has had to face that point where no amount of fixing, problem solving, and protecting has been able to stop our child's death. And, inside, we must ask ourselves about our failure, and we must face our lack of omnipotence.

Father's Day is often a forgotten holiday, overshadowed by the longer-standing tribute to mothers. But for the bereaved father it is a poignant reminder of bitter sweetness: sweet in the memory of a loved, now lost child; bitter for the death and pain and recognition of the inability to have stopped what happened. Fathers do not often have a chance to share their hurts and concerns. Often they are unable to do so, a remnant of childhood learnings about the strength and stoicism of "big boys." A father may even be uncomfortable opening up to his wife, and the

wife who pushes him to talk may be pushing too hard. Father's Day does not have to be a time when everyone pours out of the woodwork to say, "I'm sorry we haven't talked. Let's do it now." But it can be a time when the family gives Dad a hug, does something special, helps with the chores and mostly, lets him know how important and needed and loved he is. It is some of these things that he has lost with the death of a child. And, like Mother's Day, the day set aside for fathers does not have to be limited to a Sunday in June. It can be any day and every day. Fathers often show their hurt differently, often internally. But they do hurt.

Gerry Hunt

TCF Upper Valley Chapter, VT

Father's Day Revisited

Now I can look back upon that first Father's Day, the first after the death of our son Jeff. I was a mess. A man without hope, with little or no reason to continue living, deep in my own depressive grief, I could not share any joy with others.

I look back wondering how I could have treated my wife and children as I did while they were trying to celebrate in my honor. Inside, I was crying out, "What are these useless gifts? Don't you know the only gift I want is to have my son."

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 only 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*

But it was through the love, caring, understanding, nurturing of those loved ones which has brought me so far from that first Father's Day. Now I can enjoy the joy of others, I can laugh once again, and once again, there is a life worth living.

For all those fathers for whom this is the first Father's Day, have the best day that you can.

TCF Louisville, KY

Daisies in Huge Handfuls

"Pick more daisies" was the most popular expression in our family. I picked it up from a magazine article about a 94-year-old lady in Kentucky who, when asked what she would do differently if she had her life to live over, responded "I would take more chances; I would eat more ice cream and less beans; I would have more real troubles but fewer imaginary ones; I would climb more mountains; I would swim more rivers, and I would pick more daisies."

Our son, Mark, seized the daisy expression as the theme both for his life and his entrance exam essay at UCLA. It helped him live his brief 18 years; his essay helped him get an academic scholarship.

Daisies became our family flower. They marked our attitude about living. And they marked our son's memorial service. After it was over, his friends and fraternity brothers each threw a daisy into the ocean. Daisies still mark his grave every week. It has taken me almost two years to return to really thinking about daisies and what that quote by a 94-year-old lady really means. During that time I made a pretty big mess of things. I did the best I could, but I was often going through the motions outside, but empty inside.

To me, what this quote means is we really do have to pull ourselves together again and go on. Dr. Charles Heuser, a former pastor at our church, notes "going through the steps of grief is like walking through the valley and shadow of death. Keep walking, but don't camp there."

Our children would not want us to

"camp there," but to go pick more daisies—to somehow live an even more meaningful life in their name. As I go on I am truly a different person. I don't suffer fools or superficiality very well any more. As one of my best friends said..."I get rid of beige people." Yet, I will drop everything to help another bereaved parent. I certainly have more "real troubles and fewer imaginary ones." But it's OK—I like myself better that way.

And I am returning to embrace life each day again. But this time I am following my heart instead of my expected career. I am taking more chances, climbing more unfamiliar mountains, and picking daisies in huge handfuls.

Mark would want it so.

Rich Edler

TCF South Bay, CA

In Memory of my son Mark Edler

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 no-

where. 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 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

A Bear Hug for Father's Day

As Father's Day approaches, we are reminded of the significant contributions and unique love of fathers, grandfathers and stepfathers. Their defined role, after the death of their children, is to support their wives and surviving children. But their pain is deep.

Men, by their nature and in response to our society's expectations, do not usually grieve as openly as women. They do not talk as candidly about their loss. They generally do not reach out to others for comfort. They are, after all, the rock, the solid center of the family. Their wife's pain supersedes their pain because women are fragile. Or so we are told.

Yet, as I look into the eyes of so many bereaved fathers, I see a deep, gripping pain. The tears left unshed,

the words that are never spoken, the anger, guilt and agony....all remain in the eyes of the bereaved father.

What can a father do? Talk with other bereaved fathers. Read books written by bereaved fathers. Talk with spouses, private counselors and close friends who are not as structured in their "male" societal roles. Try to attend three meetings of Compassionate Friends. You don't have to talk. But you might decide to express a single thought or idea, logically presented, to the small group. You might find peace in this place, and then again, you might not. But, as my own dad often said, "Step up to the plate and see what happens." He was a pretty wise man... a child of the depression, a football player, Greatest Generation, WW II Marine, a fighter, a provider, a protector...a man's man. He endured much in his 78 years, and I only saw him cry a few times.

But when his friend lost a child, my tough dad was the first one to reach out with a bear hug that wouldn't let go until the tears began to flow. They both cried. They both knew that the agony of losing a child was far worse than the horrors of war. Together, they cried.

Happy Father's Day... May your bear hugs be many and your memories become sweeter with each passing year. May your child live forever in your heart so that peace embraces you always.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

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 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

Please Be Gentle

Please be gentle with me for I am grieving. The sea I swim is a lonely one, and the shore seems miles away. Waves of despair numb my soul as I struggle through each day.

My heart is heavy with sorrow, I want to shout and scream and repeatedly ask, "Why?" At times, my grief overwhelms me, and I weep bitterly, so great is my loss.

Please don't turn away or tell me to move on with my life. I must embrace my pain before I can begin to heal. Companion me through my tears and sit with me in loving silence. Honor where I am in my journey, not where you think I should be.

Listen patiently to my story. I may need to tell it over and over again. It's how I begin to grasp the enormity of my loss. Nurture me through the weeks and months ahead. Forgive me when I seem distant and inconsolable. A small flame still burns within

my heart, and shared memories may trigger both laughter and tears. I need your support and understanding. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. I must find my own path.

Please, will you walk beside me?

Jill Englar

TCF Westminster, MD

Life Goes On

When asked, "What is the most important thing you have learned about life?" Robert Frost replied, "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on."

As bereaved parents it is sometimes hard to believe this simple truth:

~ When your child dies and life feels like you have been punched with a metal press, life goes on.

~ When you cannot get up in the morning because of exhaustion, life goes on.

~ When you are not sure what day it is, life goes on.

~ When you cry in the cereal aisle, life goes on.

~ When friends hide from you, life goes on.

~ When your partner does not understand you, life goes on.

~ When the boss tells you to pull it together, life goes on.

~ When you do not recognize yourself, life goes on.

~ BUT, when you get up, get dressed and go to work, life goes on.

~ When you realize that love never dies, life goes on.

~ When you can laugh even a little, life goes on.

~ When hope returns, life goes on.

~ When new friends offer a hand, life goes on.

~ When a small hand fits into yours, life goes on.

~ When people say your child's name, life goes on.

Our children wait for us to realize life goes on. It was meant to go on. It has to go on and so do we.

*Keith Swett,
Seymour, WI*

SIBS

Sibling

*A First-Timer's Perspective:
Thoughts on the 2005 National
Conference*

When my father began going to the national Compassionate Friends meetings several years ago, I thought it was wonderful. When my mother joined him a few years later, I was ecstatic. The idea of the two of them being surrounded by other bereaved parents in an environment that allowed them to share their experiences seemed nothing short of brilliant. My sister Lynn and I agreed that it showed definite progress on their part in dealing with the loss of our older brother Rich. We were their cheerleaders, taking care of the house and the dogs while they did their thing in Atlanta, Salt Lake City, and Hollywood, CA. For our

part, we wanted nothing to do with it. We always managed to find an excuse not to attend...the meetings were too far away. We had to work that weekend. We just weren't ready to go yet. Last summer we learned that the 2005 National Conference was to be held in Boston...a mere twenty minutes from our house. We were stuck; we had to go.

If I had been hesitant to attend the other conferences, the sudden death of my sister this past November did nothing to increase my desire to go. I had no problem helping in preparation for the conference, but I tried to think of every possible way out of actually going. However, the bottom line was that Lynn and I had agreed to go—if for no other reason than to support our parents—and so I went. Alone. And it was scary.

Having had literally no exposure to Compassionate Friends meetings, I didn't know quite what to expect. I knew that the men and women who flocked to our house in late November were extraordinary. They felt the pain of my parents as we stumbled blindly through Thanksgiving night and Christmas morning; they looked at me, saw the pain of their surviving sons and daughters who had lost their brothers and sisters. I could take them in small doses, but disregarded them in part because they were there for my parents. No one really knew what it was like to lose a brother or a sister... let alone both. I dreaded going to the conference because I didn't want to deal with the consequences of opening the door. I worried that once I started dealing with all my grief I wouldn't be able to stop. And I was right. From the outset of the conference, I was overcome with sorrow and sadness for all the people who had suffered losses as bad, if not worse than my own. I couldn't see past the sadness and senselessness of all the loved ones who had been lost.

As the weekend progressed, however, I came to see that while it is indeed overwhelming, the very essence of this beautiful support system is found in its awe inspiring numbers. While the workshops I attended ranged from slightly boring to extremely stirring and inspiring, no part of the weekend moved me as much as the Candle Lighting ceremony and the Walk to Remember. These two events embodied the TCF belief "We need not walk alone". Looking around the room at the hundreds and hundreds of candles that were lit in honor of those we have lost roused a feeling like no other I have ever experienced. It was sad and tragic, yet beautiful in the communal-ity of the pain we all shared. Walking

(Continued on page 7)

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



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

Regular meeting: Thursday, June 6th at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: *What gifts has your child left you? Have you ever tried listing them? We focus so much on the loss and If you really thought about it, there are so many.*

Since the Fourth of July is on the first Thursday of the month, we will not be meeting in July.

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.

- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett in memory of: **Michael**: “Happy Birthday in Heaven Bud. We love you & miss you so much!” Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota and Brooklyn
 - ♥ Elizabeth Golden in memory of: **Andrew Golden**: “Happy heavenly birthday Andrew! We love you!”, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff, Blair, Rose & Teddy
 - ♥ Cindy Stevnes in memory of: **Justin**: “Happy Birthday” Justin in heaven (May 7th). Missing you each and every day. Always in our hearts. “ Love Mom & Matt ♥
-

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Continued from Page 6 - Sibling

among the mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters, down the beautiful streets of Boston on Sunday morning was amazing. Each person displayed names and pictures of those they had lost, proud to have their loved ones be known. Perhaps most satisfying of all was to take part in this walk, not as the lonely trio my parents and I have become, but as part of a larger family. To see my father walking

with his new friends, my mother a short distance behind with others she had recently met, and even me...walking not with my sister and brother as I would've liked, but rather for them, beside my new friend as well.

Throughout the weekend, I heard it said many times that TCF is a family, and though it's a family no one would ever choose to be part of, it is remarkable nonetheless. Are the conferences for everyone? No. I didn't want to go because I was scared and it was

inconvenient. The truth is, there is no convenient time to fall apart. You will always be able to come up with an excuse that prevents you from dealing with things. While the weekend was hard at times and left me utterly exhausted at the end, it was worth it. For those of you who are too busy/too tired/too anxious to go to a conference, I hope for your sake you “get stuck” going like I did. It's an experience you'll never forget and one that cannot be conveyed through words.

Ribbon Ceremony at the May Meeting



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

June 2024

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

