

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**March 2026**  
**Volume 38, Number 3**

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

## Chapter Leaders

Joyce Gradinscak  
Mary Hartnett  
(734-778-0800)

## Newsletter Editor

Brenda Brummel  
10531 Calumet Trail  
Gaylord, MI 49735  
810-623-1691  
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:

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

**March 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

**March 7th - 1:00 pm Annual**  
**Bowling Fundraiser**  
**Vision Lanes - see page 1**

*No Craft meeting until further notice.*



## The Compassionate Friends

### 17th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

*In loving memory of all the children who died too soon*

Saturday, March 7th, 2026 at 1:00 pm  
(Registration will begin at 12:30 pm sharp)

Vision Lanes  
38250 Ford Rd  
Westland, MI 48185  
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

Please let us know if you will be joining us so we can reserve lanes  
Joyce Gradinscak @ 734-560-6883  
Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410

\$25 per person

(Includes: 2 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza & pop)  
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 Drawing and Prizes

Please make check payable to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)  
Mail to: Mary Hartnett 5704 Drexel St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

**OPEN TO PUBLIC**

## Love Never Goes Away

“Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing.”

Sound familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous “ouches” can compare with the hurt we now feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have. So...we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few commonly recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guide-lines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable... some day.

TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don't have that measure anymore. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, and to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be “crazy” and TIME to remember.

Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress against anyone  
1  
(Continued on page 4)

# **Our Children Loved and Remembered Always**

*This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.*

Let Us Remember Them Always

*Child*

*Parent, Grandparent, Sibling*

*Date*

*Age*

Names available to members only.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

else's. Be your own timekeeper. Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and their moments... but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief...it only becomes tolerable and livable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost – try thinking the good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child...HE/SHE DIED. We didn't lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very, very glad I loved. Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

*Darcie Sims*

## A Simple Thing

"You don't know how much I miss having someone to throw the football with..." Isn't it odd how the simple things we say to one another can trigger deep, deep sadness, how our whole world can seem to come to a complete stop, when we have lost someone very important to our lives? Or is it?

Actually it is a natural response. It has been six and one-half years since our son died, and we have spent that time studying and actively working through our grief. We knew instinctively from the beginning that we must face it squarely. We discussed that day he died how we must deal as best we could with each problem, each emotion, when they arose, no matter how strange it may be or how difficult.

Right away we purchased all the books we could find on grief. Our desire to learn about these strange feelings we were having was strong, our appetites insatiable. And we have come far in these years and in our dedication to know what was hap-

pening to us and why. We have only recently discussed that we felt that we are no longer actively grieving for our son. We feel we have recovered from grief. Intellectually we know there will be periods of sadness sparked by memories. Our studies have taught us this. We feel we can not only deal with this but welcome it as a reminder of him and his value to us. For his death represents so much more than merely a person leaving our lives. The shock waves of loss will probably go on forever when we have moments of need of him. Perhaps the simple things caused us to miss him the most—like preparing for homecoming at our university and having no one to toss a football with...

I often think of throwing the ball away—it often needs air even though it it's only handled occasionally by my husband—but I know it would be a fruitless act because there are so many other reminders—musical instruments lying mute, the brown fedora collecting dust. We have learned to laugh again. To participate in life again. But today, oh today! How sad I felt. How quickly the tears came when my husband said, so sincerely, so quietly, you don't know how much I miss having someone to throw the football around with..." I felt my heart break again.

Tomorrow we will teach the dog to catch a Frisbee, but it will never be the same. It won't ever be the same again.

*Fay Harden  
TCF Tuscaloosa, AL*

## Grieving Parent's Bill of Rights

Though you should reach out to others as you do the work of mourning, you should not feel obligated to accept the unhelpful responses you may receive from some people. You are the one who is grieving, and as such, you have certain "rights" no one should try to take away from you.

The following list is intended both to empower you to heal and to decide how others can and cannot help. This is not to discourage you from reach-

ing out to others for help, but rather to assist you in distinguishing useful responses from hurtful ones.

1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief. No one else will grieve in the exact same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.
2. You have the right to talk about your grief. Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want about your grief. If at times you do not feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.
3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions: Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt, and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without conditions.
4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits. Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.
5. You have the right to experience "griefbursts". Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but it is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.
6. You have the right to make use of ritual. The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you the funeral or other healing rituals such as these are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.
7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality. If faith is a part of your

life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.

8. You have the right to search for meaning. You may find yourself asking, "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for the clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them.

9. You have the right to treasure your memories. Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.

10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal. Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

*Alan Wolfelt*

## Just A Stepmom

From the time I was old enough to play "house," I knew I wanted to be a mom. However, time passed, and it seemed it wasn't meant to be. I was almost 40 when the love of my life walked through the door. Not only did he share my faith and my love of music, he also came with four children as a package deal. I gratefully became a stepmom.

As the years passed, we were a typical blended family dealing with typical family issues. We adapted easily to co-parenting as we all focused on what was best for the kids. Sometimes when I look back on those days, I am

amazed at the love we all shared.

All four kids had very distinct personalities. Megan, our oldest, was and still is, a dreamer. She marches to the beat of her own drum and makes no apologies for it. Roy, a year younger than Megan, was a friend to all. He was outgoing and fun and never met a stranger. Once he came to pick me up at the airport. I found him sitting with a child of about 6 years old and his mother. Neither of them spoke English but Roy was communicating with them and making them laugh.

Taylor is next in the family tree. He was born 10 years after Megan. Taylor had such a gentle spirit. He loved all animals, and all animals loved him. He loved old-time country music, and his laughter and smile were contagious.

Finally, we have Kelsey who came along a year after Taylor. She loved going for rides with her older brother who called her a chick-magnet. The girls flocked to him when he brought his little sister along. Kelsey feared nothing as a child and has become even stronger as an adult.

As we approached the worst day of my life, we were just a typical family. Megan and Roy had both graduated from high school and were working. Roy was full-time at the same company I worked for. When our paths would cross in the office everyone knew he was my son, and I was his mom. When he decided to enroll at Ohio State University, I could barely conceal my pride. However, I was devastated when he announced he was moving out. Roy had decided to take an apartment with a friend and start making his own dreams come true. He continued to drop by the house occasionally to do laundry or pick up the latest leftovers, but I missed him.

Then came January 13, 2008, the day my world stopped. Roy was in his apartment alone when he died. He was just 20 years old. The coroner determined that an artery to his heart didn't develop properly and ultimately his heart just stopped. Natural causes.

Everyone was devastated. How could this be true? How could he be

gone? We stumbled through the next days in a fog. We wrote an obituary for our 20-year-old. We planned a funeral. We stood in line and accepted condolences for hours. We listened to stories about Roy and hung on every word. We were broken.

It was at the funeral that I was first reminded of my status. It was subtle and I didn't really notice at first. Caring friends and family hugged me and whispered in my ear, "How is your husband holding up?" and "Let me know if we can do anything for him." I was treated as the caretaker of the family instead of a grieving mom. I suppose I accepted this as how it was supposed to be and kept my pain to myself as we tried to figure out how to continue living. My focus was on supporting my grieving husband, but I was dying inside.

The second worst day of my life was April 16, 2012. Taylor was 15 years old and had developed what appeared to be a rash on his shoulder. He went to school that morning and to the doctor at noon. Taylor died at the doctor's office. The coroner said Taylor had been born with a blood disorder that had been dormant his entire life but became active due to a recent virus. Natural causes.

Another funeral. Another receiving line of friends and family. This time, I was even more clearly defined as the stepmom. Again, I accepted my role as a step away from those who suffered this great loss.

As time moved on after both losses, I found myself feeling almost like an imposter. Grief was tearing me apart inside, but I was questioning my feelings. Maybe I was being selfish. I should be focusing on my husband and his loss. This wasn't about me. I did not give birth to Roy or Taylor. I was just a stepmom. Society said I should not be grieving so hard. When I encountered someone who heard I lost a stepchild, the questions inevitably began. "How old was Roy when you married his dad?" "Did he live with you?" "Were you close?" It seemed

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# Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, March 5th. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: What are some of the Simple Things that you or your family miss?

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**A Love Gift** -No dues or fees are required to belong to The Compassionate Friends. We have all paid the ultimate price, the loss of our loved ones. Parents and others may provide financial support for our chapter through Love Gifts. It is a beautiful loving way to remember our loved ones. Love Gift form is on back page.

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## 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.*

Debra Viola, whose beloved son, **Jeffrey**, born 7/02; died 9/26; 48 years

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## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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they needed to quantify my grief before determining if they would grant me sympathy. One associate at work actually said, "At least he wasn't your own kid, right?" I suppose that was meant to make me feel better. It did not.

I looked for books about the loss of a stepchild but very little is available. I tried counseling but I don't think the counselor understood. What I found most helpful was The Compassionate Friends. As I have heard many others say, The Compassionate Friends saved our lives. This group of strangers listened and understood. They comforted my husband and they comforted me. They taught me it was OK for me to grieve.

As the years have passed, I have learned a great deal about grief. We eventually moved into the leadership of TCF and have been honored to help

others as they learn to navigate their own path. Helping is healing. Truer words were never spoken.

*Barbara Davies*

### I Don't Know Why

I'll never know why.

I don't have to know why.

I don't like it.

I don't have to like it.

What I have to do is make a choice about my living.

What I do want to do is accept it and go on living. The choice is mine.

I can go on living, valuing every moment

in a way I never did before,

or I can be destroyed by it and,

in turn, destroy others.

I thought I was immortal.

That my family and my children were also.

That tragedy happened only to others.

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But I know now that life is tenuous and valuable.

So I am choosing to go on living, making the most of the time I have, valuing my family and friends in a way never possible before.

*from the book, **My Son, My Son**, by Iris Bolton, whose son Mitch died by suicide.*

### Grief

As far as I can see, Grief will never truly end. It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love does – forever. It's simply the way the absence of your love one manifests in your heart. A deep longing, accompanied by the deepest love. Some days, the heavy fog may return, and the next day, it may recede, once again. It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.

*Author unknown*

## Celebrating Life Is A Better Way to Cope with Death

Today marks a week since my youngest brother's birthday. But instead of recalling memories of the family all here together eating cake and ice cream and celebrating the joyous occasion, my mind conjures up images that only seem to surface twice a year, on Jeffrey's birthday and on the anniversary of his death.

Seven years ago Jeffrey committed suicide. Though I was only 14 at the time and so many years have passed since his death, when his birthday rolls around each year, so does the pain. Today, however, is my last day for mourning. About three years ago I decided that instead of fighting back my emotions or feebly attempting to act

as though everything is okay, on his birthday and on the anniversary of his death, I would allow myself a week to mourn and heal.

I have even developed a ritual: On these two occasions I dress all in white, sit in a private place with the lights turned off, put on Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath My Wings" (the song she sang in the movie "Beaches", right after her best friend died), light a single white candle, and sort through old photographs of Jeffrey and the family.

The color white, for me, has always represented light, rebirth, and newness. So wearing all white is my way of saying, "Instead of mourning his death, I will celebrate his life." "Lighting a single candle stems from our Catholic faith. It is a way of showing that the fire of his spirit is still alive. And with the heat of the candle I can

feel the warmth of his presence.

Listening to Midler's song helps me say all the things I didn't get a chance to say. Especially when I carefully listen to the words and realize how much they apply to Jeffrey and me. The song seems to have been written for us.

When we were younger, I was the star of the family. The straight-A student who sang in the church choir and excelled in academic and athletic competitions. Jeffrey was the quiet one. He was reserved, an average student, and spent most of his time reading or practicing Ninjitsu. So it was no surprise that I commanded most of the attention from my parents.

This didn't seem to bother Jeffrey, however. He was easy going, a good listener, and best of all, he always supported me in everything I did. I thought he was the perfect brother. Losing him was extremely hard for me.

Everyone kept telling me to cry and let out the grief I was feeling. Someone even said that a year from now I wouldn't remember how painful this experience was. But even now I remember how hard it was to return to school and my everyday life and pretend that everything was fine, acting as though I was dealing with his death and would be okay. I know they meant well by sharing their condolences and advising me on the best way to deal with my grief. But in the end I realized that no one could truly understand what I was going through, and their remedies for relief may have worked for them, but for me, I needed something more.

The first birthday after his death was especially hard, and I dealt with it in a very different way than I do now. I spent the entire month wearing black, closing myself off from every-

*(Continued on page 8)*

### 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](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.

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

January 2026

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,  
*please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel*

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LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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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

one around me, and crying every time I had the inclination. I don't regret dealing with his death that way, but I do find solace knowing that seven years later, I can silently mourn, without wearing black, without shutting myself off from the outside world, and without wearing a mask of happiness.

I have healed at my own pace and in my own time. And I understand now, that is the only advice I could ever give someone experiencing a similar tragedy. Take your time and deal with it in your own way. Only your way is the right way.

Now I deal with Jeffrey's death the best way I know how - by celebrating his life. And in that, I am at peace.

*Karma Lowe TCF, Lake Jackson, TX*