

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



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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:

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

May 19th, Tuesday, at 6:00 pm.
TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern
37714 Six mile Rd. Livonia. It is
in the Laurel Park Mall.

Contact Joyce Gradinscak,
734-560-6883, you can text or call her
No Craft meeting until further
notice.

49th TCF National Conference in
Baltimore, MD
July 2nd - July 5th
www.compassionatefriends.org



At our meeting, we will have colored ribbons available on which you can write a message to your child, grandchild or sibling, and hang it on a wrought iron fence. These will stay up through May and June to celebrate Mother's Day, and Father's Day. This follows the tradition that the wind blows through the ribbons and carries our messages out into the universe. We will include a bagpiper and other music to keep this evening special.

Mother's Day

As I write this, I am very much aware that Mother's day is coming soon. That will be an undoubtedly difficult day in countless homes. For all the thousands of mothers who will be glowing with a radiant kind of pride and happiness that day, there will also be those of you whose hearts are aching for that

phone call that will never come, that special visit, that one Mother's day card which will not arrive. For us, the reading and re-reading of that one last card - "Mom, you are the greatest and I love you" - will have to last a lifetime. How does a mother face a lifetime of silence on "her" day? Ask those of us who have "been there" already, and we will tell you of lonely Mother's Day visits to spring-green cemeteries where the sweet clear notes of a single spring bird perched nearby float over our heads and seem surely to have been intended as divine comfort for a heart full to breaking. You will hear of yellow roses being sent to a small church - "in memory of..." and a cherished story of a kind and sensitive friend who sent a single rose that first Mother's Day "in remembrance".

Always we struggle with the eternal questions - how does life in fairness extract from us the life of a beloved child in exchange for a clear bird call in a spring-green cemetery, a slender vase of yellow rosebuds or even the kindness and sensitivity of a friend who remembered our loneliness and pain on that day?

(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



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

Where is the fairness and justice in such barter? The answer comes back again and again - life does not always bargain fairly. We are surrounded from birth to death by those things which we cannot keep, but which enrich, ennoble and endow our lives with a fore taste of Heaven because we have been privileged to behold, to experience, to wrap our arms around the joyous and beautiful.

Can we bottle the fragrance of an April morning or the splendor of a winter's sunset and take it home with us to place it on our fireplace mantle? Can we grasp and hold the blithesome charm of childhood's laughter? Can we capture within cupped hands the beauty and richness of a rainbow? Can we pluck the glitter of a million stars on a summer night or place in an alabaster box the glow and tenderness of love?

No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithesome charm, the glory, the glitter, the tenderness and the love of a child who has departed, someday the pain will speak to you of enrichment, the compassion for others, of deeper sensitivity to the world around you, of a deeper joy for having known a deeper pain. Your child will not have left you completely, as you thought.

But rather, you will find him in that first clear, sweet bird call, in those yellow rosebuds, in giving and receiving and in the tissue wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.

*Mary Wildman
TCF Moro, IL*

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 repeat-

edly 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*

A Dog Named "HOPE"

On December 24, 1989 my daughter Jeanne Marie died suddenly at the age of 31 of an aneurysm. I had given her a yellow lab puppy for Christmas 1988. Jeanne was going through some very difficult times and I thought a dog of her own would help. After she named her puppy, I asked how she came to name her Hope. She replied, "Whenever I look at her I'll know there is always Hope for me." The two of them were inseparable. So much love between the two of them.

Several weeks before Jeanne died, as she was playing with Hope, she looked up at me with her big brown eyes and said "Mom, if anything happens to me will you take care of Hope?" It was as if she knew. Now I have Hope who is always happy to see me when I arrive home. When I

cry Hope gets very upset with me; barking, running around me, licking my tears away; until I get so mad at her and THEN I get control of myself and love her for loving me.

At Christmas time when Hope opens her gifts we sit around laughing at how excited she gets opening her presents. Ripping the paper off to get to another treat, etc. It brings back memories of how excited Jeanne would become as she opened her gifts opening one after another with such joy and many OH's. It's such a warm/wonderful feeling to laugh at Hope and remembering the past Christmas'. Just picture adult's sitting around laughing at a dog opening her gifts, laughing so hard that we felt our sides would burst.

You see, Hope is an extension of Jeanne. She was her baby. Although I'm divorced, Jeanne's father and I are Grandma and Grandpa to Hope. When friends get talking about their grandchildren and showing pictures, I begin to tell them about my "GrandDog." If someone had told me years ago that someday I would love a dog as I do, I would have told them they were crazy. Now maybe I am! Without Hope I would not have been able to survive this terrible loss.

Since Jeanne's death the house isn't so quiet and lonely. I have someone who still needs me to care for them, to talk to, to play with, laugh at, and someone to love. I now have "HOPE"!!!

*Betty J. Lambert
TCF Dubuque Area Chapter, IA
Mother of Jeanne Marie*

This Mixed-up Grief

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up, confusing emotions involved in grieving?

On the one hand, you feel restless; on the other hand, you feel like you don't want to move at all. You feel desperately alone, yet you don't want anyone around. You feel scatterbrained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous. You feel like crying at nothing, and sometimes laughing at anything. (Or do I have that backwards?) Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don't talk to you. And yet, if they don't talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares. You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was. And yet it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one, and never even mention the living ones.

Grief settles over you like a hot blanket. You're as cold as the winter snow.

Grief presses on you like a steamroller. You're floating in a bubble above yourself. Grief boxes you in on four sides and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion. You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own. And eventually, with a light as sharp as a sunburst, you hear yourself saying your child's name with an unfamiliar smile on your face. You remember some of the funny times and feel laughter building in your throat. One morning you notice the sun is shining. Many days, months, and possibly years have passed unnoticed ... and somehow, you are still here. Even though your child is still ... there. You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist. And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) peace.

And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cool shower on a hot summer day, so you find you WANT

to remember. And tender memories of Love lift you to unreachable heights, to the brightest of stars, to the loveliest touch of your child.

*Dana Gensler
TCF Louisville, KY*

And A Child Shall Lead Them

If you are looking for an answer on Mother's Day on why God reclaimed your child, I don't know.

I only know that thousands of mothers out there desperately need an answer as to why they were permitted to go through the elation of carrying a child and then lose it to miscarriage, accident, violence, disease or drugs.

Motherhood isn't just a series of contractions, it's a state of mind. From the moment we know life is inside us, we feel a responsibility to protect and defend that human being. It's a promise we can't keep.

We beat ourselves to death over that pledge. "If I hadn't worked through the eighth month." "If I had taken him to the doctor when he had a fever." "If I hadn't let him use the car that night." "If I hadn't been so naïve, I'd have noticed he was on drugs."

While I was writing my book *I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise*, I talked with mothers who had lost a child to cancer. Every single one said that death gave their lives new meaning and purpose. And who do you think prepared them for the rough, lonely road they had to travel? Their dying child. They pointed their mothers toward the future and told them to keep going. The children had already accepted what their mothers were fighting to reject.

The children in the bombed-out nursery in Oklahoma City have touched more lives than they will

ever know. Workers who had probably given their kids a mechanical pat on the head without thinking that morning were making calls home during the day to their children to say, "I love you."

This may seem like a strange column when joy and life should abound for the millions of mothers throughout the country. But Mother's Day also is a day of appreciation and respect. I can think of no mothers who deserve it more than those who had to give a child back.

In the face of adversity we are not permitted to ask, "Why me?" You can ask, but you won't get an answer. Maybe you are the instrument who is left behind to perpetuate the life that was lost and appreciate the time you had with it.

Erma Bombeck

You Are Braver

You are braver than you will ever know. You may not realize it but you are valiant, magnificent and strong in spirit. You are courageous. You have endured and somehow survived the most horrific injury that anyone in this life can suffer. Your child has died. But somehow you have miraculously found the strength to still breathe in and out. And after a while, you managed to put one foot in front of the other and have tried to the best of your ability to adapt to a strange new world; one that exists without your precious child in it. A world you must step out in to and face every day without any outward signs that you are altered for life.

If you were to wear your most grievous wound displayed on the outside of your body like permanent stigmata, would people recoil from the sight or would they perhaps offer compassion and understanding for your piteous condition? That's why

(Continued on page 8)

SIBS

One

It was only 1 second, one thought, one decision, one action in a lifetime of seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions. It was so fast, so permanent, so irreversible, so hopeless. This moment, this thought, this decision, this action do not define him, do not honor him, do not immortalize him. It is the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that define him, that honor him, that immortalize him.

I remember my brother in all of the other seconds, and thoughts, and decisions, and actions that preceded this one. I remember him coming home from the hospital, lip synching in the basement, falling

out of the tree, biking across campus, coming home from school, from boot camp, from war... I remember him hiking, and skiing, and running, and laughing, and crying. I remember how safe I always felt when he was around. I knew he would take care, protect, defend.

I don't remember exactly when my brother became an amazing human being I just looked at him one day and knew he was. I knew that nothing would make him change his mind about me. He was without judgment, without prejudice, without preconception. I knew my brother because we talked and he listened. I respected my brother most for his humanity for being so sensitive, so vulnerable, so honest. I loved my brother for sharing the

load when it was too hard for someone he loved to carry alone. I knew my brother because he left so much of him in me.

I trusted and respected my brother's decisions in the preceding 946,080,000 seconds, I have to trust and respect this one decision the same. I honor my brother by honoring myself. I do not dwell in that one moment, instead I celebrate and cherish all of the others. In that 1 second, one thought, one decision, one action, I found the strength he had given me and I will not let him down. I will not let that one moment be the only one.

Michele Mallory

Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings Telephone Friends

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062
Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938
Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006
Marlene Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919
Gail Lafferty - Sudden Death - (734) 748-2514

Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.

TCF CHAT ROOM: www.compassionatefriends.org

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

National Mailing Address: PO Box 46, Wheaton, IL. 60187

Phone: (877)969-0010; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: mfedel2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room) 1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; tcfannarbormich.org
St. Clair Shores: 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, kjmac21@aol.com
Detroit: Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church, 12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.
Troy: St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday 7-9: Tina@586-634-0239
South Rockwood TCF Chapter: Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive. South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469

A Sibling's Feelings

The pain of a sibling loss is so real we sometimes hide it deep inside of ourselves. As we watch our parents hurting we see the pain in their eyes. We are also hurting not only for the loss of our brother or sister but also for our own parents. We need to reach out to each other to let each other know we are hurting inside.

Our lives have all changed forever. I know they lost a son but I lost my younger brother I loved, and as siblings we share a special bond that will never have anymore for he no longer lives...my brother, my friend.

I will always miss you and I will never forget you for you will always live in my heart, and I have wonderful memories no one can ever take away from me. In my heart you will stay, love you forever.

Marie Porreca

PLEASE REMEMBER

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

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, May 7th. at 7:00 pm - Special Ribbon meeting - see page 1 for information.

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.

Joyce & Rob Gradinscak in memory of *Adam*: “Another Angel Day . How can it be 20 years!”; Love & Miss You-Mom & Dad

Family & Friends in memory of *Sylvia Fregonara*: “On your Angel Day, May 16th We will forever miss your love, support and friendship. Now in Heaven with your Michael.” Love, Susan

Susan Steinberg in memory of *Shannon*: “It is 11 years since you left. We think about you and miss you every day. Forever you will be the love & beauty in our lives.”; Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris & Ajax

Elizabeth Golden in memory of *Andrew*: “We love and miss you so much! Happy Heavenly Birthday Andrew.” Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff, Blair, Rose and Teddy

Mary & Mike Hartnett in memory of *Michael Anthony*: “Happy Heavenly Birthday Michael! You would be turning 30 this month. We miss you and will always keep your memory alive. We will celebrate you!!!”; Love you, Mom, Dad, Katelyn, Dakota & Brooklyn

Tom & Connie McCann in memory of our sons *Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis considered a son by our family, Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey & Jim “Jimmy” Vick.*

In memory of: Our son Ryan “Ryfro” on his Angel Day & Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis on his birthday 5/15

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.

Chuck & Judy Stepanian whose beloved son, *Cody* born 5/8 died 3/25; 34 years

Dottie Symanski , whose beloved son, *Corey*, born 2/11; died 3/22; age 45 years

Jeremy Pongracz whose beloved brother *Corey*, born 2/11 died 3/22 age 45 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

May 2026

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

LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Love Gift Donation of \$ _____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

Direct my gift to: _____ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web
_____ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

you are so brave. Although no one else can see how horribly injured you are, you are still doing your best to function and participate in this life. I

want to challenge you to be brave just once more. If you have not been to a Compassionate Friends meeting, please muster all of the strength and courage you have and walk in the door for that first meeting. We'll help you from there. We care. We understand. We too have the same wounds as you. We need not walk alone.

Janet G. Reyes
TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX

WHAT I WANT OTHERS TO KNOW

That everything—everything— takes extra effort.

Sleeping, working, pretending to be ok, breathing...