

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



May 2023
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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:

May 4 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

**May 16- 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner at:
Grand Tavern 37714 Six mile Rd.
Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park Mall.**

Contact Kathy Rambo (734-306-
3930); you can text, call or e-mail her at
Katjrambo@gmail.com.

No Craft Day

**July 7-9: 46th National Conference,
Denver, CO**

www.compassionatefriends.org

May 4th - Annual Balloon Lift

Bring you family and friends to our annual Balloon Lift. Balloons will be provided. Also, there will be small cards on which you can place names and messages. If you would like, bring a small favorite snack to share with others. A special event to honor our children!

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? 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

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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 only to members.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

the glow and tenderness of love?

No, we cannot. But to those who have been given the splendor, the blithe-some 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

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 moth-

ers 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 we 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

Milestones

A kaleidoscope of images will affect all of us during this month of May, when family celebrations and gathering times abound, most especially Mother's Day, Memorial Day and high school graduation. These are days that normally mark milestones and create bonds and memories within families. As so often, the focus on family and children will touch the emptiness we carry inside our beings. It is so hard to come to grips with the ongoing reality of our child's death. We take it in as we are able, over many months and years, struggling to gain the courage and strength to accept what we cannot change.

Reading about the insights and journeys of other bereaved parents continues to help me in my own healing. Recently, the words of Ann K. Finkbeiner, in *After the Death of a Child: Living with Loss through the Years*, have offered me new perspectives, understanding and wisdom. In her book, Finkbeiner, a bereaved parent and a science writer, explores the long-

term, large-scale effects of a child's death through a series of interviews with bereaved parents. She concludes: "In the end, I learned two things about the long-term effects of losing a child. One is that a child's death is disorienting. The human mind is wired to find patterns and attach meanings, to associate things that are alike, to generalize from one example to another, in short, to make sense of things. Your mind could no more consciously stop doing this than your heart could consciously stop beating. But children's deaths make no sense, have no precedents, are part of no pattern; their deaths are unnatural and wrong. So parents fight their wiring, change their perspectives, and adjust to a reality that makes little sense.

The other thing I learned is that letting go of a child is impossible. One of my earliest and most persistent reactions to T.C.'s death was surprise. I had no idea whatever how much he had meant to me. All I knew was that I hadn't wanted to think about it. Our children are in our blood; the bond with them doesn't seem to break, and the parents [who were interviewed] found subtle and apparently unconscious way of preserving that bond.....None of this—that children are a central part of parents, are the link between the parent's past and future, are tied up with the parent's own self-image is surprising....What is surprising is that it's true. We're not used to this sort of merger with another person. We're used to thinking of ourselves as separate individuals; we fall in love, we make alliances, we have obligations, but we do all this as free agents. We choose our own lives and die our own deaths. But we don't choose our love of, alliance with, or obligations to our children. Our children are much more central; they're something like our own humanness or our reasons for being on earth. If children are part of parents, they are not arms or legs but bones and breath...."

Perhaps Ann Finkbeiner's words will be helpful to you, as they are to me. Perhaps you have other readings to

suggest or your own writings to share. I welcome them all for publication in the newsletter (to be published, articles and poems must include the author's name). In our attempts to make sense of what is senseless, let us continue to hold out our hands to one another in empathy and friendship and in honor of our beautiful children, forever loved and missed.

Kitty Reeve

TCF Marin and San Francisco, CA

Our Day – A Very Special Day

Our day, a very special day; a day that is set aside specially to honor all Mothers. Mothers, a beautiful word. What other word would you use to best describe giving birth to, nursing, loving and caring for tiny helpless human beings, a gift of life to treasure? But weren't we taught that once you give a gift to someone, you should never take it back? What went wrong? Mine was taken away from me. Does that mean that I wasn't worthy to be a Mother, that I was failing, that I didn't appreciate the gift? The gift was too precious to be given for keeps. It was only loaned to me for a short while, even in my sorrow I feel special, for I know the true meaning of the word Mother. I have reached the ultimate, from the joy of birth to the sorrow of death. I belong to a special group who truly knows the meaning of the word Mother. Would I have not accepted the gift if I had known the terrible loss I would feel by having it taken away from me? No, I would still hold out my hands and accept such a precious gift, to love and to cherish, even for a short while, is worth every fear. This year on Mother's Day, I'll shed my tears but let them be as a soft summer's rain, a rain that nourished the earth, tears that heal and cleanse my heart.

Vera Babb TCF, St. Louis, MO

A Request of Our Longer-Term Members

Take a moment of your time today to think back to the beginning of your

grief journey. It's difficult even to recall the events surrounding your child's death, let alone remember your first Compassionate Friends meeting. Yet you came, and when you arrived a sweet voice soothed your shattered nerves, talked with you, welcoming you and explaining the chapter meetings so you would know what to expect.

Someone was there for you. Many "established bereaved" were ready to give you a hug, dry your tears, hold your hand and support you as you said your child's name for the first time in an open group setting. There was a gentleness and kinship in this room that you would find no where else in the world.

Your unique perspective is needed by the many newly bereaved who enter our meetings each month for the first time. Each of these parents deserves a gentle welcome, a kindred soul upon whom they can rely. Trust is a sacred bond that gets us through the first meeting and perhaps the second and third meeting as well.

Remember who you were and all that you have become since coming to Compassionate Friends. If you can find it in your heart to give back to those who need the security of our group now, please return for them. The gift of hope is such a precious treasure.

Author unknown

Beatitudes For Those Who Comfort

**Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.

**Blessed are those who do not always have a quick comforting answer.

**Blessed are those who hear with their heart and not with their minds.

**Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.

**Blessed are those who admit their comfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.

**Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.

**Blessed are those who continue

to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd had dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.

**Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.

**Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

Jackie Deems

TCF Gulfport

The Wounded Heart

Children have preceded their parents in death for eons of time. We are not the first, nor will we be the last, to enter the realm of Bereaved Parents. But for now right now it is OUR HEARTS that are freshly wounded and OUR HEARTS in need of mending.

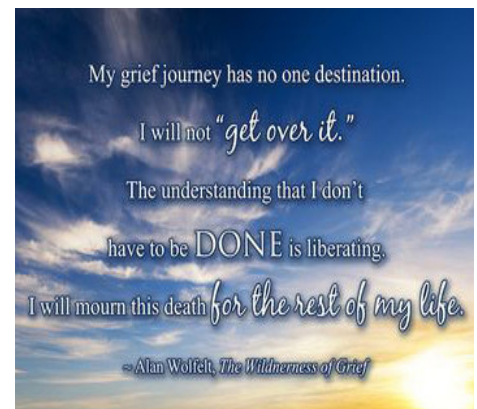
Wounded hearts must be allowed to mourn and lament their loss; to pour out their pain, agony, sadness, hurt, and anger; and to release their well of tears. Wounded hearts need to be wrapped in quietness, gentleness, and compassion, away from the turmoil of daily life.

A wounded heart, not allowed to mend from the depth of its agony, will be as an abscess to swell and undermine, erupting at a distant time. Or, suppressed, will slowly choke the spirit of its host. Only the bearer will know when his heart has healed.

The wounded heart, encouraged and given the time and freedom to mend, will carry in its chambers the memory and shared love of a precious child.

Nancy Green

TCF Livonia, MI



SIBS

A Journey to the “New Normal”

May 31 marked seven years since my only sibling, Dave, died from cancer at age 32. This June 28 we would have been celebrating Dave’s 40th birthday with a big party, and I’d be kidding him about going bald, just like all the Snepp men before him. Instead, I’ll be getting ready for the TCF National Conference, at which I’ll share memories of his brilliance, great smile, and sense of humor with those who will never have the pleasure of meeting him in person.

At this point in my grief journey, most will be good memories of how Dave lived, rather than bad memories

of how he died. I can’t recall the moment when that shift of perspective occurred, but I would like to share a few memories and milestones that have marked the way:

- Months after Dave died, I went to see the movie “Big”, starring Tom Hanks, and “lost it” when his mother stared out the window wondering if she’d ever see him again. I watched the movie again recently and didn’t lose it.
- It was three months before I felt up to sharing with anyone the details of the day my brother died at his home in Bellevue, Washington, in the company of Mom, Dad, and me. On the way home from that emotional conversation, I drove the wrong way down a one way street in downtown Chicago –

it might be smart to have a friend drive you to your first few TCF meetings!

- I discovered that the grief path is not a straight line. A few good days can be followed by several bad ones. I’ve heard other TCF members call this their “roller coaster ride.”
- For a year, I couldn’t keep the radio on if “Wind Beneath My Wings” came on. For the next year, I kept it on but cried through it. Now, I can usually make it all the way through without any tears!
- With the help of TCF, I realized that despite friends expecting it to be possible, I’d never be “back to normal.” My focus instead shifted to finding my “new normal”. While I can’t point to a time when that happened (probably after the 1990 TCF Conference), THAT was a milestone.

• For three Christmases after Dave died, I didn’t put up a tree in my condo. For Christmas, 1991, as I was getting out ornaments for my first tree since his death, I came across a bunch of ornaments that he had had in his apartment. I came totally unglued then, but now I look forward to seeing those ornaments each Christmas.

• It was three years before I felt that I had enough emotional energy to pursue a relationship. Even now, I don’t have a lot of tolerance for guys I go out with that gripe about their brothers or sisters.

My most vivid “landmark” to date along my grief journey came in February 1993. Following my Dad’s father’s death in December, 1992, we were in Atlanta cleaning out my grandfather’s

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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

Tecumseh TCF Chapter: First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Marsha & Jeff DiCenzo 517-918-5608 & 517-358-1883



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

Livonia Chapter Page

Regular meeting: Thursday, May 4 at 7:00 pm. The Annual Balloon Release will be at the church. Please feel free to bring family and friends to this annual event. Balloons and paper for messages will be provided and a bagpiper will be present for the event. If you would like, bring a snack that was a favorite of your child(ren).

A Love Gift is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form is on the last page.

- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett in Memory Of : Michael; "Happy Birthday in Heaven Bud. Sure miss you more as every year goes by! " Love You, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota and Brooklyn
 - ♥ Elizabeth Golden in Memory Of: Andrew Golden; "We love and miss you Andrew!" Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff, Blair, Rose and Teddy
 - ♥ Susan Steinberg in Memory Of: Shannon; "Shannon, it's been 8 years and how can we still be here without you? Forever the love and beauty in our lives!" Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris & Ajax
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory Of: Ryan "Ryfro" on his Angel day 5/10.; Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis on his birthday 5/15; in memory of our sons Ryan "Ryfro" , Tom Jr., Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis considered a son to our family. Mark "Sparky" Abbott, Joe Coffey, Jim "Jimmy" Vick.
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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.

Carol Abdelnour, whose beloved son, **Dennis (Denny)**, born 11/25; died 9/22; 33 years

Claire and Gene Richmond, whose beloved, son, **Steven**, born 1/4 ; died 5/30, 57 years

Victoria Tessmer, whose beloved son, **Ian Thrasher**, born 7/29; died 1/31; 42 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

May 2023

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

LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Love Gift Donation of \$ _____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

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

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

apartment, and I came across a pile of post cards and letters that Dave had written to my grandparents through the years. Earlier in my journey, a “blind side” such as that would have sent me into a tailspin. In this case, though, my immediate reaction was one of happiness, for I had found a part of Dave that I didn’t know I still had! I saved a few of the post cards, sent a couple to my cousin who was referenced in some of the letters, and (amazingly) threw the rest away. It was fun to share the memories, but I didn’t feel the need to hang onto them. It was at that point, nearly five years after Dave’s death, that I truly felt as if I was closing in on that “new normal.”
Karen Snapp