

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



May 2024  
Volume 36, Number 5

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 2 - Monthly Chapter Meeting  
see page 7

May 21 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>



In place of the Balloon Launch in May, we have decided to be more global friendly, and are transitioning to this new idea. We will write a message to our child, grandchild or sibling, on a colored ribbon, 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. We will still include the bagpiper and other music to keep this evening special.

### Mother's Day, "Before" and "After"

While sorting through boxes and bags, it is not unusual for me to find something unexpected. It happened just the other day. Sifting through a box, I came across a wrinkled, somewhat yellowed piece of lined school paper. I carefully unfolded it only to find a drawing of a stick-mom and stick-daughter standing along side a mammoth daisy. The mom and little girl were holding hands with huge lop-sided grins on their faces. In her little girl just-learning-to-print handwriting were the words, "Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you, Kristina."

Even six years later, little "gifts" such as these can bring fresh tears. It is times

like these that I am glad that I was an incredible pack rat, especially when it came to saving things that my children have made. I can picture my then-blond, petite little Nina (her nickname), with the wispy hair, bent over the kitchen table, crayon in hand, creating that handmade card filled with love. Memories of breakfasts in bed, only to return to the kitchen after finishing the "gourmet" meal served with tender care, to find it in such disarray that it took hours to clean up! Even through the tears, these are the sweetest memories.

As I type this, I look at another gift from a Mother's Day past; a little statue of a harried mom, surrounded by mop, broom and bucket, that says, "World's Greatest Mom," chosen for me at a neighborhood garage sale. I came across it accidentally shortly after Nina's death, unearthing it from its hiding place. I wondered to myself, why had I packed it away. Did Nina know that I did and did she think that, by doing so, I hadn't appreciated her gift? Did I ever thank her for it along with the other garage sale items that she proudly brought home to me, or did it show on my face that I really didn't need anymore "junk" around the house? Sometimes resurrecting these treasures can bring unpleasant feelings of guilt as we wonder if our children knew how much their little gestures of love meant to us. When our child dies, it becomes easy to second-

# **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*

Nams Available to Members

*May*



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

guess ourselves, trapped in our fixations and exaggerations of the negative things that may have occurred during our child's life.

The first Mother's Days after Nina died was a grief-numbing blur, as it occurred only three days following her death. Unlike previous joyful dinners out with my four children pampering their mom, we spent the day making funeral arrangements and choosing a casket for one of them. In the early evening, I overheard it said to someone else, "Happy Mother's Day." I turned to my own mother and apologized for having forgotten. I could not imagine ever celebrating another Mother's Day again. I am sure the dads have these same feelings on Father's Day. My heart goes out to them, because I think we forget that they, just like us, grieve and hurt, too.

For those mothers and fathers who have lost their only child, I have been saddened by stories told to me by them of attending church on Mother's Day Sunday and when the pastor asked the mothers in the church to please stand, they were undecided on whether they should stand or not. I hope that they will always remember, and the fathers as well, "Once a mother, always a mother; once a father, always a father." We are forever their parents.

If we are fortunate to have surviving children, they are often forgotten as well. In the early days, we become obsessed with the one who is missing. My own children showed quiet patience with this. I often wonder if they thought "What about us? We're still here!" Now with almost seven Mother's Days behind me, I try to accentuate what I do have. This does not happen overnight. I found that in celebrating my surviving children, I could still honor Nina's memory and find ways to include her as well. I have developed a ritual where I get up early on that morning and bring flowers out to the cemetery. I bring a flower and a note to some of the mothers that I know who have buried children there to tell them I am thinking of them and their child. There is something very

healing when reaching out to others. I then sit by my daughter's gravesite on the spring-green grass listening to the sweet call of a robin. I bring her a flower and write in her journal telling her how thankful I am to be her mother, how much I love and miss her. That is our private time together; the rest of the day is spent honoring my other children.

Mother's Day and Father's Day are holidays especially created for us. Try to get through them the best that you can, in whatever way feels right for you. Truly, only you know what that is. Whether it is alone those first few years or with people that you love and who understand, do something that you find comforting. It is your day, for you were the giver of a precious life—you held a miracle in your arms. Even as powerfully destructive as death is, even that cannot take those memories away from you—they are your child's gift to you.

With gentle thoughts and peace on your special day,  
*Cathy L. Seehuetter ~ TCF, St. Paul, MN*

## Adjusted

"It's been several years since your son died,"  
They say, "Surely, you must have adjusted by now."  
Yes, I am adjusted—  
Adjusted to feeling pain  
And sadness and grief and guilt and loss.  
Adjusted to hurting and unexpected tears.  
Adjusted to seeing people made uncomfortable upon  
Hearing me say "My son died."  
Adjusted to losing my best friend because I'm not always "up."  
Adjusted to people acting as if grief is contagious.  
And TCF meetings are "morbid."  
Adjusted? Oh, yes, to many things.  
Knowing I won't hear his voice, but listening for it still.  
Knowing I won't see him drive his Toronado,  
But staring at every one I see.

Adjusted to feeling empty on his birthday  
And wishing for just one more time with him.  
Adjusted: As life goes on—  
To realizing I cannot expect everyone I meet  
To wear a bandage—just because I am still bleeding.  
*Shirley Blakely Curle ~TCF, Central AR*

## 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 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 rose-buds, in giving and receiving and in the tissue wrapped memories that you have forever in your heart.  
*Mary Wildman TCF Moro, IL*

## Wounded Heart

*"Your broken heart requires at least as much care as a broken bone. With proper care you can be confident that you will heal. The same powerful forces that mend a broken bone will heal your emotional pain, but a wounded heart needs time and proper care to heal." ~Harold Bloomfield, MD~*

~~~~~  
If someone fell and broke a leg, people would rush to their aid. They wouldn't stop to even think about it. Yet, when it's our hearts that are broken, few rush to our aid, and even fewer understand.

At first, we receive the cards and phone calls wishing us well and telling us "if there's anything I can do" ... but

they soon taper off to a trickle. Then we begin to hear that we must get on with our life, we can't let it get us down, and we're told just how soon we should be back to normal... we're given a deadline of sorts. When we don't follow the acceptable standards for healing, we are thought to need help.. the professional kind ... and we're told that we are in denial.

These same people, who seem to have all of the answers, not only have never experienced the loss of a child, but also tend to not want to get too involved ...too close to our pain. They would rather stand off to the side until we're back to our old selves ...whatever that is! They're uncomfortable when we speak of why our hearts are broken and they don't mention it for fear of reminding us of how our hearts broke in the first place... as if we could ever forget.

When they ask us, How are you?... it's more a greeting than a question. They don't want to hear how we ache inside, how lonely and empty we feel how desolate we feel. Why ... because they can't fix it. They can't make us whole again. And unlike a broken bone that's healed, we will never be as good as new.

We will be forever missing a part of what made us the person that we once were. When our child died, so did a part of our heart and where that piece was, now there is nothing ... only a gaping hole that nothing and no one can ever fill.

Unlike a broken bone, we will not mend in a few weeks ... in fact, we will never fully mend. We learn to live without that piece of our hearts ... to live with our loss, to survive ... one day at a time!

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux  
In Loving Memory of My Angels...  
Michelle, Jerry & Danny*

## Permission to Be Crazy

It's OK to do strange things, anything that gives your heart a sense of peace, as long as you don't hurt anyone. Whether you're running down the beach, standing in the shower, or

riding in your car screaming at the top of your lungs, releasing balloons with notes attached, talking to an empty chair, wearing their clothes, baking a cake for their birthday, signing their name on cards, decorating their grave with things they loved, or collecting angels in their memory — it's OK. No excuses are necessary. You have learned to do what your heart needs, and that is a big step.  
*Elaine F. Stillwell, MA, MS  
Excerpt from the booklet Healing After Your Child's Death*

## Mom, You Just Can't See Me

Remembering is so painful. Even after eleven years, it is difficult to write about Connie's death. It still hurts to think of the last day of my life with her, to reconstruct events and decisions made so long ago, to retrace footsteps, to know I can never go back and undo what happened. I can never again tell her the things I want her to know.

I will always miss my child. There is a vacant space in family gatherings, on holidays, birthdays, graduations, weddings and, especially, whenever photographs are taken. I wonder what her life would have been like had she lived, and I wonder how she would look now. Going through the grief and anguish of losing her was an unavoidable part of living, but I survived. Many times since, I have told myself, "If you can survive the loss of your child, you are strong enough to survive anything."

I thought I would shatter into a million pieces when she died, but that didn't happen, and losing her has made me more compassionate. Not only did I survive, but my bitter, angry memories have turned into soft, gentle longings. I see her now in the faces of her friends who experienced knowing her, and I see her in the eyes and smiles of children.

It is probably the fear of death that is so devastating for human beings. Her tragic death brought me face to face with the realization that, just as

*(Continued on page 7)*

## SIBS

### Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably already know – since you know me better than anyone.

No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives. And the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could have imagined. And at times I didn't want a future that didn't

include you. Ultimately, there are no answers to my questions: There is no replacing you And there is no solace for my grief.

There is only the simple choice I make every day. To live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared. To strive to carry on the best of who you were. To cherish the brief time we have with others. To celebrate the opportunity to be alive. To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own. To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you. And to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again.

You gave me many gifts while you were alive and I continued to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling I could not have traded our time together for any-

thing. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

*Melanie Lamourei*

### Common Sibling Grief Issue: Taking Care of Parents

When asked to edit the sibling page, I was told that each newsletter has unifying themes and this issue would focus on spring and Mother's Day. Mother's Day? I am a bereaved sibling! I thought about siblings being the forgotten grievers. After further thought, however, I realized that Mother's Day creates anxiety for bereaved siblings just as it does for bereaved parents.

Some surviving siblings resent that only their parent's loss is recognized. This sense of being forgotten can be heightened on Mother's or Father's Day when parents expect enhanced sympathy and attention to their grief. Other surviving siblings are consumed with taking care of their devastated parents, perhaps to the extent of neglecting their own grief process. These siblings may experience greater worries about their parents on the impending Mother's Day. Holidays always highlight a family's loss.

For me, I worry about showering my mother with enough love to ease her pain. But, I feel ultimately incapable of being as enthusiastic as I was when Andrea was here to help me cook or decorate the apartment, or to brainstorm, weeks in advance, on whether we should chip in for jewelry or kitchen utensils. I feel strange and empty gift shopping alone. I hate the cards that say "To Mom, from Both of Us". So please parents, remember that all holidays, even Mother's Day, are hard for surviving children too.

*Allison Hanis, TCF Manhattan*

### 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](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](mailto: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](mailto: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 Thursday7-9; [Tina@586-634-0239](mailto: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, May 2nd at 7:00 pm. This is our special meeting where you will be able to write notes to your child(ren) and listen to a bagpiper as we remember our children. If you would like, bring one of your child's favorite foods. All the material for the notes will be supplied.

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

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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.

Crystal White whose beloved son, **DeJuan Z.**, born 1/13; died 6/na; 15 years

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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.

- ♥ Jan & Mike Wortmann in memory of Justin: "Happy Birthday in Heaven.", Mom, Dad, Shannon, Josh & Julia
  - ♥ Stefanie Porter in memory of Emmy: "Emmy Happy 18th Birthday Beautiful Girl. You are so missed. Looking forward to when we meet again." Love, Mom
  - ♥ Faye & John Heller in memory of John Desmon Heller II: "Happy 49th Heavenly Birthday! We love & miss you always." Love, Mom, Dad & Kim
  - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of Ryfro, Bryan "Bryfro", Tom Jr., Mark "Sparky", Joe Coffey & Jim "Jimmy": "in memory of Ryfro on his Angel Day 5/10; in memory of Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis on his birthday 5/15; in memory of our sons & Ryan "Ryfro" Tom Jr., Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis who is considered a son to our family, Mark "Sparky" Abbott, Joe Coffey, Jim "Jimmy" Vick
  - ♥ Susan Steinberg in memory of Shannon: "Shannon, it's been 9 years now and still here without you. Forever the Love & beauty in our lives". Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris & Ajax
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## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

we are all born onto this earth, we all must die. Until she died, I had not internalized this, but because of her death, I've grown. I believe we are all knitted together in the great sweater called humanity, and the love and pain we endure are the stitches that bond us together.

A few years ago, I had a vivid dream

about Connie. She was grown-up and beautiful. I ran to her and said, "Oh, Connie, how I have longed to see you. There are so many times I just yearn to see you."

And she replied, "I'm with you all the time, Mom. You just can't see me."

*Joanne R. Mott,*

*excerpted from Bereavement Magazine*

*There is an Egyptian story that says when God created the world, He made everything small so that it could grow up with time. The grain into the wheat, the baby into the man, the bud into the flowers. Only sorrow was created full grown so that it might decrease with time and Man might be able to live with it.*

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

**May 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



**Memorial Day**

For each grave where a soldier lies  
at his rest  
For each prayer that is said today out  
of love  
For each sigh of remembering some-  
one who died  
Let us also give thought to the moth-  
ers and fathers, the brothers and sis-  
ters, the friends and the lovers whom  
death has left behind.

*Sascha*