

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**November 2024**  
**Volume 36, Number 11**

**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:**

*November 7 -7:00 pm - see page 7*

*Tuesday, November 19 at 6:00 pm.*  
*TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern 37714*  
*Six mile Rd. (same place-different*  
*name) Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park*  
*Mall.*

Contact Joyce Gradinscak,  
734-560-6883, you can text or call her.

*No Craft meeting this month*

*December 8th - Annual TCF Candle*  
*Lighting - Plymouth Park - 7 pm*

### *Save the Date* *Annual Compassionate* *Friends Candle Lighting*

The Compassionate Friends World-wide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

The Livonia Chapter Candle Lighting will take place in Kellogg Park on December 8th at 7 pm. There will be music, readings and all the names of children that have been submitted will be read. Families and friends are welcome. Candles are provided.

If your child(ren)'s name was on the list last year, it will be read this year. If you would like your child(ren)'s name added to the list to be read, call 734-778-0800.

### *Thankful vs. Thankless*

This is the time of year when many bereaved parents start saying out loud what newly bereaved parents have been thinking for weeks and weeks— "I really am dreading the holidays." And why not? When your grief is so new, you haven't had the necessary time to accept life as it is for you now.

On the other hand, there are those of us who have had that necessary time

and the proper support who are able to observe the holidays in a less painful way. We have kept some of the old traditions that warm our hearts and thrown out those that are either too painful or meaningless now. We have created a life that doesn't include someone who was a vital part of who and what we were. We're different now, doing different things because losing a child forces you into that position if you are to survive in an emotionally healthy way.

The words thankful and thankless follow one another in my dictionary; so close together in a book, yet so far apart in meaning. When you think about it, the difference between the two words is full and less. Though those of us who have had more time do, like the more newly bereaved, have less in the way of family, our lives still do have a fullness because we have learned to be thankful and appreciate that which we have left in the way of people and memories— more so than we ever thought possible.

As you approach this Thanksgiving, if you haven't yet been able to make your adjustment, I hope you will feel what you must for now because whatever you are feeling is okay. It isn't until you have reached the place in your grief where the ability to make good choices returns to your life that you can make some important changes in how you approach the holidays. I hope the transi-

# **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*



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

tion from thankless to thankful will be soon in coming for you, for that will mean some peace has returned to your life. Above all, I do wish you peace during this holiday season. I wish you more of the same in the new year.

*Mary Cleckley,  
TCF Lawrenceville, GA*

## Hope

Last month the first holiday catalog was deposited in my mailbox, "So early," I thought, with tired resignation and more than a little resentment. The catalog unmistakably heralded the approach of the season of good cheer, and somehow I would have to get through it. It meant weeks of feeling like a despondent bystander as the world cloaked itself with bright trappings of love, joy and goodwill toward men.

I was a bereaved parent, and I would spend yet another holiday caught up in the anguish of remembering. With the catalog indifferently grasped in my hand, I sat down in the kitchen, my heart heavy. My thoughts drifted back to last year's holiday, and I again saw my husband's melancholy face as he plaintively asked if we could put up just a small tree. I agreed only because it seemed important to him. It would be the first time since the death of our daughter that holiday decorations would grace our home. I had felt no joy, no solace when I looked at that tiny, glowing tree, but it was a huge relief not to feel the overwhelming pain I expected.

I sat in the kitchen, slowly turning the catalog's pages. I was so lost in thought I scarcely saw what was in front of me. Last year the mailman had delivered greeting cards and best-wishes-for-the-season cards, as always. I had opened some with appreciation; others, the ones I knew would ignore our heartache, I tore open almost savagely. I had mailed my own greeting cards to many of these same people, and as had become my custom, each card was sent in memory of our daughter. It was the only way to manage the pain of a task I once loved.

It had been the fourth holiday season without Tracey. I found myself absent-ly leafing through the last of the pages. Though absorbed in my reminisces, I had carefully avoided looking at the many pages of toy offerings I knew I would pay a painful emotional price if I lingered there. Children's clothing had to be desperately rushed by as well (though my well-trained eye caught the words "girl's size fourteen" and stopped, despite all I could do... oh, Tracey). Housewares were fairly safe, though uninteresting, and these last pages depicted a wide variety of novelty items. A pair of butterfly earrings captured my attention, turning my thoughts immediately to one of my Compassionate Friends ...a truly loving friend who adored butterflies.

"I could order these as a gift for her," I thought, and the idea startled me. With the notable exception of the painful purchase of a toy last year for my beloved daughter, I had not sought out a gift for anyone since her death. As the thought took root and began to flourish, I felt my heart, so long frozen with grief, begin to warm.

Cautiously I pondered these emerging feelings. Was I ready for this? I was astonished to feel the ice encasing my heart begin to melt; emboldened by the warm feelings of caring spreading through me, I looked more closely at the remaining pages of the catalog. There! Another small item I was sure a second dear TCF friend would like. I found myself actually enjoying filling out the order form for both items. Enjoying???? Did I really use that word?

Had the pain and uncompromising grief, always intensified at holiday time, abated somewhat? Was I truly feeling lighter, more able to cope? Did this mean, could it mean, that I might one day step back into the world when it donned its festive mantle? I knew as I sat there I would always deeply love and ferociously miss my child...and I knew that grief would forever be a part of my life. Understanding that, might it still be possible to allow a small amount of holiday spirit to trickle into my life this year?

I think just for today I'll hold onto that possibility, because today it seems I can imagine a less painful tomorrow. Today my heart contains a bit of warmth. It felt good.

*Sally Migliaccio  
"We Need Not Walk Alone"  
Copyright 1998*

## The Inscription "

*Here lies an American Solder Known  
but to God."*

As I read the words over softly  
I said to myself, "How odd!"  
For I knew the Unknown Soldier

Ever since he was a lad.  
He was just an average lad,  
Neither too good nor too bad.  
He liked to play ball and marbles,  
Climb trees, fish, and swim,  
Collect moths and arrowheads.  
I watched him grow to manhood  
And fall in love with a fair-haired lass,  
While a war-torn world away  
The cry was "they shall not pass."

I was there on the station platform  
When he kissed his sweetheart Good-  
bye.  
There - he started his journey  
To a foreign land to die.  
Letters came from o'er the billows;  
What a story they did tell!  
Then - the message - he was missing  
In the Argonne's flaming hell.

Back across the restless ocean  
To his own dear native shore,  
they brought his broken body home,  
Here to sleep forever more.

Back and forth, the sentry paces  
With his firmly shouldered gun,  
ever guarding the sleep of the soldier  
Called "unknown" by everyone.

But I know his name, so listen!  
While I tell it to everyone.  
He's not an Unknown Soldier  
For his mother called him - Son.

*Annabelle Gunnet Jones  
Bereaved Parents, USA "A Journey*

## THANKS!

Thanks to the friend who did know the right words to say, "There is a group in town who might help you."

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that phone number and find out about "that group".

Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing that it would really hurt to talk – and talked.

Thanks for the dad who said, after that first meeting, he could never come back – but did.

Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms around a "new one" and said, "They can really help."

Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was able to bake cookies for her "compassionate friends".

Thanks to the parent who could never talk in front of people – who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six foot father who cried in front of the other men – and didn't say I'm sorry.

Because of you, we will be able to help someone we don't ever know – next month!

Thank you!  
*John DeBoer,  
TCF Greater Omaha Chapter*

## My Child Has Died... Don't expect me to be Thankful

Friends...if this is your first Thanksgiving since the death of your child, I am very sorry. There is nothing I can say here to make it any better; wish I could. Everyone has to do the holiday thing in their own way...whatever might make you the most comfortable. I will share with you part of my Thanksgiving traditions.

For years our family had gone away for Thanksgiving. We were joined by extended family and it was always a good time. When our kids were little, we went camping and cooked the turkey outside in a smoker. Some great memories were created.

The kids got older and I figured out that fixing a big meal outdoors was

only for everyone else, not the ones bringing everything for it and fixing it! Our plan then changed and we began going to a hotel on the beach. Now that was the way to go! We had a big suite, nice heated pool at ocean's edge and maid service!

Then one year, Brad died two months before Thanksgiving. I could not fathom being thankful. My child had died! All the hotel arrangements had been made the year before. We were on automatic pilot and just went with the flow. We did insist on everyone sharing a memory with Brad and lighting a candle in his memory. When I made this request there were probably some anxious moments. I don't remember nor did I care. In some ways, I think it was good for us, sticking with some of the traditions that Brad loved and adding new ones to honor him. Was it hard? No doubt. Should we have stayed home...gone somewhere else? No matter where we would have gone, he still would not have been there...there is no getting around that. The pain would have been with us no matter where we were.

We told Brad we loved him, writing it in huge letters in the sand. I spent quiet moments by myself, walking on the beach. I cried by myself and with others. I even laughed a couple of times as we shared silly moments of other Thanksgiving days with Brad. Most of the day, I felt I was in the "twilight zone"...participating but removed.

That night, when I was by myself, I sat and wrote a letter to Brad...a letter telling him how thankful I was that he was my son, that I had him for those 17 years, 364 days. That I was thankful for every moment, great, good and not so good. I was thankful for the love we still had. Have I ever had a "normal" Thanksgiving again? NO...no. I have rearranged things in my mind...some things I keep to myself so others can fully enjoy the day. But I always include Brad in some way. I cannot change that he is no longer physically here...so I have to change my world to make way for this new

life of mine and make the best of it.

*Linda Moore,  
Orange Cooly BP/USA*

## Rebuilding Your Life One Piece At A Time

Death, especially unexpected death, changes one's life in ways that cannot be anticipated. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed.

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of putting the pieces back together is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect what was with what is and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This thinking is the work that grief demands; it is the creation of a new picture of your life created one piece at a time.

*Stephanie Elson  
From the TCF blog*

# SIBS

## How Can They Move On?

How can they move on? Every day I realize that while my brother's death may have touched many people's lives, they seem to be able to just pick up where they left off and continue with their lives. For me, it has been so much harder.

I learned this week, that last year, my brother's girlfriend had gotten married. While I am very happy for her to have finally been able to love again, my happiness is also filled with a little jealousy. I think of my brother at some point every day. Does this mean that she has forgotten him? I have asked myself this question all week. I hope that she hasn't and at least remembers the good times that

they had sometimes. I find it hard to think of her with someone else, but she was so miserable for so long, she deserves a little happiness. I was also told that she is pregnant and is having her baby soon. When I heard this I almost cried. I think that was harder than finding out that she was married. Then a real jealousy kicked in. I thought, "Hey, what about Sean's baby?" He'll never know the joy of being a parent.

After mulling this around for a while, I realized that everyone must move on. Sometimes I feel as if I can't go on another day because I feel so much pain. That pain is not so strong as it was two or three years ago, but it does come back to visit now and then. When Sean first died, a few of his friends came over a lot. Over the past few years, that began to happen less and less until his friends stopped

coming at all. One of his friends still comes by or at least calls my mom at Christmas. Another puts presents on his grave occasionally.

I know that a lot of people cared about my brother, but I think that knowing him for 19 years and being as close as we were has made it all the harder for me. I know that he watches over our family and is always with us. I know in my heart that moving on is not the same as forgetting. I hope with my heart that all who knew Sean still spare at least one thought for him once in awhile. While I wish every one of his friends much happiness in their lives, I hope that they will never forget.

*Traci Morlo, TCF St Louis MO*

## Someone Who'll Watch Over Me

I remember how I used to watch over you,  
Tried to teach you the things you should do.

I can remember the things I would say  
As I tried to guide you along the way.  
But since you've gone, and our lives have changed,  
It seems the roles have been re-arranged.

Sometimes it feels like it used to be,  
Only you're the one watching over me.

I know in my mind that you're not here;  
Yet there are times when you feel so near.

I've learned if I let the love flow through,  
I'll get to keep a part of you.  
For though death comes the love never goes away. Your presence is with me every day.

For my guardian angel you now will be,

*Author Unknown*

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

# Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, November 7th at 7:00 pm. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: Any things you have done to make the holidays more bearable?

Be sure to read the information on page one about the upcoming Candle Lighting in December. Although it may seem like a long way away, the leadership wants to be sure all names are included, so there are ornaments for everyone.

*Thank you, Cindy*

*We would like to say thank you to Cindy Stevens for all the years of dedication to TCF. Cindy lost her son Justin 11 years ago and has been a big part of us for many years. She has helped with countless things over the year. She and her husband, Matt, have been a huge part of our yearly bowling fundraiser and our candle lighting in Kellogg park each year. Cindy has been a Co-Leader for the past four years and she is truly going to be missed! We wish her and Matt the best as they start their new adventure in Georgia where they have their new home waiting for them.*

*Love, Your TCF Family*



## Button Machine

For the next two meetings, there will be a button machine at the meeting. You are welcome to make a button with your child's picture

**You don't get over the death of someone you love, you get through it. It becomes part of the fabric of your life.**

***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.

♥ Carol in memory of ***Connie, Chris & Cynthia***; "Missing our girls Connie, Chris & Cynthia. Love, Mom & Dad"

## 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.*

Willem Van Reesema, whose beloved son, ***Noah***, born 12/8; died 4/20; 26 years

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

## **November 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

### Secrets From a Mom at Thanksgiving

Yes, our dining room table is old. The wood has white spots where a pot of tea spilled one day, the circle over there is the place where a hot dish of mashed potatoes sat without a pad under it, the scratches are lines from homework and running little cars on its surface. The legs need to be glued back together from time to time. It doesn't even match the rest of the furniture any more.

But ...he sat at this table. My son. He ate here with the rest of the family. He helped me set this table many times. So, I think I'll keep it. And I'll light a candle and put it in the middle, even if we eat in the middle of the day. And I'll polish the chair he sat in. And I'll slowly eat a piece of pumpkin pie...just for him. No one needs to know...it's just a mother's secret.

*Alice Monroe,  
TCF Mesa County Chapter*