

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



November 2022
Volume 34, 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 3 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7
November 12 Craft Day - page 8

**November 15 - 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.

**December 1 - regular meeting with
Candlelighting**

**December 11 - Annual Candlelighting
at Kellogg Park at 7:00 pm**



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all
children who have died

**Worldwide
Candle
Lighting®**

... that their light
may always shine.



Livonia Chapter Annual

Candle Lighting

Where - Kellogg Park
Plymouth, Michigan

When - December 11 - 7:00 p.m.

Candles are provided

The Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held on Sunday, December 11, at 7:00 p.m. in Kellogg Park. Friends and family are welcome. The names from the new list will be read at that time. Any names given that evening will be read at the end of the presentation.

For the people who have already given us your child's, grandchild's or sibling's names, ornaments will be made by us and placed on the tree.

You're welcome to make your own ornament and placed it on the memory tree or there are some at Kellogg Park by our memorial tree as well as being available at our Dec. 1st meeting.

We will also be having a candle lighting at our December 1st meeting.

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

A Thousand Ways to Grieve

I'm an active griever. By active, I mean that during those first few months following my loss, I devoured every book on grief I could get my hands on. I poured out my agony in my writing, attended grief seminars, went through photo albums and searched the Internet for helpful sites. I cried and fumed and spent long hours talking to anyone who would listen.

(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



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

My husband simply withdrew and grieved in silence. Though we lived in the same house, grieved the same loss, and shared a life together, we were apart in our grief.

We all have our own ideas on how to grieve and we're quick to judge those who don't conform to our way of thinking. When Prince Charles wore a blue suit to Princess Diana's funeral, he was condemned by the press until it was learned it was his former wife's favorite.

A friend of mine was criticized for wearing a pair of red strap, high-heel shoes to her husband's funeral, the same shoes she wore on the day they met. If we are to grieve in harmony with those around us, we must give up the notion that grief can be expressed in limited ways. I once thought that grief manifested itself only in tears and depression. But I've since seen what others whose vision is greater than mine have accomplished in the name of grief. Candy Lightner, the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, is a good example.

Resolve to make peace with someone who grieves in ways that seem odd to you. Try expressing your grief in a new way: write a poem or song, start a journal, buy your loved one a gift and send it to someone you know who would love and appreciate the gesture. Wear something outlandish. Buy a bouquet of balloons in your loved one's favorite color. Laugh at something that would make your loved one laugh.

Tears, depression and sadness are all acceptable ways to show grief. So are blue suits and red shoes.

Margaret Brownley, TCF, Simi Valley, CA

Reading is a Haven... Not a Place to Hide

Some people like to read. Some people live to read. Since I was a child I have read about four books a week. So it was only natural that I develop a new reading style when my son died in December of 2002. For a week I read Todd's obituary over

and over again. I had written it. Was it suitable? I second guessed myself about that for some time. The week after Todd's death I began reading short poems, articles and short stories. I would find myself stopping and starting, re-reading a line over and over again until it finally penetrated my brain. After a month I began reading books again. It was difficult, but I found books which were suitable to my current state of mind. Books about peace, serenity, self-help, death, the afterlife. Soon I found a web site devoted to grief resources. I ordered several books and devoured them.

Reading helped to fill the giant hole in my spirit; it helped me to realize that others had walked this road and had actually survived. I was certain for the first three months after Todd's death that I wouldn't survive; in fact, I didn't want to survive.

Finally I decided to read the types of books I had always read.... history, biography, mysteries, current events analysis, funny books, sad books, books with a message. I lived in my books; for a brief period I didn't exist.. ..the only reality was the book I was reading.

Not everyone reads. Some parents spend great amounts of time in thoughtful reflection, in prayer, in meditation. Others watch television and movies. Many retreat within themselves, too emotionally pummeled to talk. Others lose themselves in their work. All balance is removed from each life, no matter what we choose. And that's what had happened to me. I had removed the balance from my life by escaping into books. After almost three months of reading, withdrawing into other worlds and living in books, I went to a meeting of the Compassionate Friends. I realized I was not balanced, grounded or centered. I realized, too, that escaping into alternative realities was not the answer.

That first meeting was frightful. My life consisted of work and home and nothing else. I imagined all kinds of terrible scenarios. But yet,

I went. I met caring parents who seemed to have their lives in order. The second meeting was better; by the third meeting I was talking... in short sentences. Gradually over more than two years, I became a participant in the meeting and in the process. I volunteered to help....just a little at first, then more as time went on. I went to seminars. I sorted through the pain, the agony, the horror I was feeling. I began to achieve a balance. My husband and I began spending weekends in the country with my family. This was a positive change for me. A friend would stop at my office and bring lunch every week. I invited a few people to our home. I couldn't see it then, but I was on the road to becoming "rebalanced". My reality is different now: my only child is dead. Much of who I am is wrapped in being Todd's mom. But my "rebalanced self" has a changing perspective. I have become more grounded through the Compassionate Friends. Sharing my feelings and listening to others has helped me to become centered and balanced.

Reading is still my passion, but it is not my life. Each of us finds an escape from the world after the death of our child..... something to revise our history and help us survive. But eventually we must seek balance, find ways of coping with our soul-shattering loss and ground ourselves in our new reality. The Compassionate Friends has done all of that for me. But I had to take the first step.
*Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/ Katy, TX
In memory of Todd Mennen*

The Pain of Losing a Child

I've never suffered a gunshot wound, but I've read that If you remain awake after being shot, you don't feel anything at first. Just numb. Then suddenly, a sensation of overwhelming cold or heat followed quickly by unbearable pain.

How similar is this to parental grief? When our child first dies, we are mercifully cushioned by 'shock'. We are numb, unfeeling. We make decisions

and follow rituals without thought but at some point, the shock wears off. Some of us experience this gradually, while some of us feel the change in the blink of an eye. My shock wore off gradually, but when it did, I felt cold. My hands and feet felt like I had been shoveling snow in a swimsuit I felt my blood rush through my veins, aware of it as never before, because it was so cold. Suddenly Shelly's death hit me. The icy fingers of terror squeezed my heart so hard, I thought It would explode. My heart didn't explode - but as I warmed up, it hurt. My head hurt, my arms, legs, liver, heart, intestines, mind, toes, my everything hurt. The pain was like none I had ever felt before.

I felt that the pain had invaded my every pore. Each cell of my body felt ready to burst.

As a gunshot wound heals, the pain slowly recedes. There is work to do. Continued medical treatment may be needed.

Rehabilitation progresses. Then there is a scar. It hurts sometimes for no reason at all. It hurts sometimes because we bang it. It hurts sometimes because we think about the cause of the scar. It hurts sometimes because we see someone else wounded by a bullet How similar is this to parental grief? As our grief progresses, our pain does ease. It takes a long time. Hard work is required. Continued help from private counselors, support groups or friends and family may be needed.

Then one day, the pain isn't the first thing to come to mind when we wake up In the morning. As a gunshot victim one morning awakens, stretches and doesn't feel immediate pain, we begin the day without tears. But, by the time lunch rolls around, the gunshot victim's body is sore from use, because It is not fully healed, and our entire being hurts because our soul and heart are sore from the effort of surviving without our child.

Then, eventually, though it sometimes seems as though it will never happen, there is a scar. It hurts sometimes for no reason at all. It hurts

sometimes because an insensitive word from another bangs it. It hurts sometimes because we just plain miss our child. It hurts sometimes because it is an especially painful time of year. It hurts sometimes because we see undeserving parents having children they don't want or appreciate. It hurts sometimes because we see a child sick or injured or killed in the same way our child was. It hurts sometimes because we see that ice-cold-terror-anguish-realization-that-my-child-is-dead look in another parent's eyes. And sometimes it doesn't hurt at all, and we live.

Tina Adamski, Tri-County, PA TCF



The Inscription

"Here lies an American Soldier
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
Together"*

A Forgiving Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving, unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the right gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful, of our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying, I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family recounts a story about something his or her child did last week, I wish for a story to tell. (Of course, when I say no one else I exclude my wife and daughter. I'm sure that they see, hear and wish what I do, although probably at different times.)

We still have much to be thankful for, we bereaved parents, and we should remember that. But now Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge the missing child, for whatever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must exhibit tolerance, forgiveness and understanding. On a day which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery. I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.
Jim Hobbs, BP/USA of Northern Texas

SIBS

River Reflections

I just got back from a river rafting trip, where I found myself thinking about my brother a lot. He died 16 months ago of an overdose of morphine. I don't know why it happened; it happened. I didn't see the beginning of his life—he was three years older, but I saw the end. I can look at it now and see it in its entirety—his 33 years of living that I so much counted on and expected to last another 70 or 80 years. I thought I would always have him to talk to—about life, about family, and about ourselves.

The river was a meditative place for me. The rhythm of the oars, the gentle motion of the raft, the shore gliding by, the gurgle of the water as it seeped into and back out of our raft—all of

this provided just enough stimulation and was hypnotic enough that I didn't want to do anything but sit and think. For a few days on the river, I floated without any of my day-to-day concerns, without the usual level of tension standing behind me.

What rose to the surface, visible in the clear water of my mind after the silt of all my worries sank to the bottom, were thoughts of my brother. Nat would have liked this trip. The rough beauty of the terrain and the quiet power of the water would not have been lost on him. He would have noticed the beauty of the full moon and the light on the canyon walls as the sun rose and set.

I have felt a lot of anger at him for dying, for taking his own life, for engaging in an activity so dangerous, for playing Russian roulette, for commit-

ting suicide. He left no note, he didn't say good-bye; he left a wife and two sons whom he loved very much but who, like me, were not enough to keep him alive. It wasn't the anger, though, that I felt on the river. I just remembered him.

Grief is at its sharpest when, after a death, he all of a sudden flashes into focus so real and so present that I can hear his voice as if he has just spoken to me. I can imagine the scent of his hair, remember the texture of his face as I touch it, and I can see him walking and talking as if he were only there a moment ago. At these times, the grief flares up; the wound feels fresh and sharp with memories of the love, the charm, and the grace. I realize both with gratitude and with anguish for the wound this reality carries, that he is not someone I can let go. These memories will come to me for the rest of my life. He is truly a part of me.

He is mixed up in my blood and my bones and the electrical impulses of my brain. And in whatever way all of these things go together to form a soul, he is a part of that too. There is no escaping him. This is the gift and the price of love—it doesn't end.

My brother was there in the river's sand and mud, in the full moon, the constantly flowing cold water, the clear dry air, the red canyon walls, and the blue sky. And he was there in me. And I was there, alive and more appreciative than I would have been before he died. I was more aware of my connection to my surroundings—that one day my body will be river mud, water, and bones like driftwood. What form my love will take then, I don't know. Maybe if there is a river and desert light offering delight to someone's senses, that will be enough. I don't know.

Emily Moore

TCF Los Angeles, CA

In Memory of my brother, Nat

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

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

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 Thursday7-9; 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
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, November 3rd at 7:00 pm. First time tables; topic tables *“What are some things or people for which you can be grateful this Thanksgiving? How hard is it to think about gratitude through your grief?”*

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.

- ♥ Elizabeth & Gerald Golden in memory of Andrew; “Andrew, your family misses you so much!”
Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff & Blair
 - ♥ Carol Mead in memory of Bobby; “Happy 39th Birthday Bobby. We miss you every day. Join us from above to celebrate you.” Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, DJ, Addison & Heidi
 - ♥ Diane Arquette in memory of Ricky; “Dear Ricky; Life has not been the same without you. Time does not heal, it has been 16 years and counting. Your brother Mike and I love and miss you very much” Love Always, Mom
-

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.

Janice Regal , whose beloved son, **John Rybinski**, Born 3/12; Died 4/15; 37 years

Michele Letenyei , whose beloved daughter, **Madison**, Born 10/13; Died 4/18; 21 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births



Our 6 year old son , Drew died a year and a half ago due to an unexpected seizure in his sleep. At the time of his death his elementary school was fundraising for a walking path to be built adjacent to their playground.

While grieving the loss of Drew, family, friends and employer were wanting to donate to a cause in his name. To us it was a no brainer, the money had to go to the walking path. When Drew was alive he was a kid full of love, energy, kindness and had an eagerness to make friends. We feel he would have greatly benefited from the use of the path along with everyone else. The design of the shapley path is approachable from any point, anyone can join in. Drew definitely sided on “more the merrier” when he was with kids. A few weeks ago the dedication ceremony took place at the school. It

was a celebration of Drew’s life. It was a bit easier to hold back the tears knowing of all of the support, love and joy from people that were there and in spirit. Drew would have been elated and proud to know he was a legend. His path, plaque, and benches are just a symbol of how much he is celebrated, loved, admired and missed. If you would like to see a small part of the ceremony find it on YouTube: **Drew Smith Walking Path Wixom MI**

*Kate and Ryan Smith,
TCF, Livonia, MI*

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

November 2022

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



Our craft day will be Saturday November 12th at Kathy Rambo's house; 1476 Penniman Ave, Plymouth from 10 am - 1:00 pm. We will be decorating 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inch ornaments. You can decorate with small holiday items or bring a picture, poems of your child to put in ornament. All other supplies and embellishments will be provided. The fee for this craft is \$3.00. Call, text or e-mail Kathy Rambo: (734) 306-3930 or Katjrambo@gmail.com.