

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



November 2023
Volume 35, 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 2- Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

**November 21- 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

**December 10- 7:00 pm : Annual
Candle Lighting at Kellogg Park**



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.

**Sunday, December 10, 2023
7 PM Around the Globe**



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

The Livonia Chapter Candle Light-
ing will take place in Kellogg Park on
December 10 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 wel-
come. 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. Please do this by early
November.

And For This I Give Thanks

"I am acutely aware that autumn is here. As I write this, the air coming through my window is crisper and the leaves are taking on the golden and scarlet hues of the season. The shorts and tee shirts, which were the summer mainstay of the neighborhood children, are being replaced by sweats and flannels. Pumpkins are replacing pink flamingos as lawn ornaments. The beauty of nature is at its most spectacular. It is unmistakably here, welcome or not...

This will be my fifth autumn, to be followed by my fifth holiday season without my daughter Nina. I find that I am far enough along in my grief to find memories to smile about now, but still close enough to remember those first few years and the piercing stab of pain in my heart that went along with them. Halloween, with memories of the costume party she threw when she was 10 years old, the major production she made out of what she would wear as a trick-or-treater, and as she got older, her enjoyment in passing out candy to neighborhood goblins. Then came Thanksgiving, one of my favorites. I liked the idea of family and friends gathering together with no other purposes other than eating until you nearly exploded and being thankful for each other and the blessings of the past year. No presents required, just the joy of

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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*

family togetherness - and the knowledge that my children were here, all of them. On that first Thanksgiving the empty chair and place at the table seemed to scream out at me that someone precious was missing. And the message of this particular holiday was thankfulness? What on earth could I ever find to be thankful for?

Some TCF parents have memories of being unable to choke down any morsel of food because they were continually trying to choke back tears that first Thanksgiving. Just wanting to curl up in a ball, pull the covers over their heads, and wake up some time in January after the last remnants of the holidays were cleared away. In all honesty, I cannot tell you even one detail of that first one: where I spent it, who was present, where I was, if I cried all day. I remember nothing.

I do remember three months after Nina had died, though. On a visit to my neurologist I tearfully told him of my depression over her death. His response to me was "Why don't you count your blessings rather than your sorrows? Think happy thoughts and maybe you won't feel so sad." I, of course, asked him if he had ever lost a child. He had not obviously. Only someone uneducated in the school of grief would say something like that.

Almost five Thanksgiving's later, have I found reasons to be thankful? I asked myself this question and decided to put pen to paper. I was surprised to say the list was quite lengthy, so I will only share a few of them. I am thankful for:

- My loving family, and the welcomed joyful additions in the last few years.

- My memory, because now the painful memories are, more often than not, replaced with the beautiful memories of the past, and they were such beautiful memories.

- My life, for whom else will keep Nina's memory alive? Of course, my family, but they have lives, as they should. I am the self-appointed keeper of my daughter's memory.

- Nina. The joy of loving her, the privilege of being her mother. Though I wish it had been much longer, I wouldn't trade those 15 1/2 years for anything.

- Smiling a genuine smile, laughing a hardy laugh, and finding my sense of humor again. I sincerely believe that Nina likes to hear me laugh and that she would want me to find humor in life again.

- My sight, because I commented (for the first time in five autumns) on the magnificent colors of the autumn foliage and the grandness of Minnesota's most sumptuous season. I didn't think I'd ever notice again. But I did.

- The Compassionate Friends, who showed me there is life after the death of a child; who allowed me to express my emotions, listened patiently, understood my pain, and welcomed me into their hearts. They helped salvage what remained of my sanity and I will be eternally grateful.

- The opportunity to give back, through TCF meetings and this newsletter. To bring hope to the newly bereaved in the knowledge that it won't always hurt this bad, and that you will make it with the love and support of family and your Compassionate Friends. And, that there will come a time that you too will find things to be thankful for again.

I am told, by those who know, that peace and acceptance are that light we are searching for at the end of the tunnel. Though I find myself still looking for it at times, those further down the grief road have reassured me it will come. Maybe not this Thanksgiving or next, but that it will. And I believe them.

*Cathy Seehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN*

Love Never Goes Away

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sound familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouches" can compare with the hurt we now feel. Nothing can touch the

pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have. So..., we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what do we do with it? Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few commonly recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guide-lines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and livable... some day.

TIME...the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child...the first word, first tooth, first date, first car...now we don't have that measure anymore. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse.

So what do we do? Give ourselves TIME...to hurt, to grieve, and to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember.

Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress against anyone else's. Be your own timekeeper.

Don't push. Eventually you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and their moments... but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief... it only becomes tolerable and livable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost - try thinking the good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child...HE/SHE DIED. We didn't lose the love that flowed between us...it still flows, but differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very, very glad I loved.

Don't let death cast ugly shadows, but rather warm memories of loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!
Darcie Sims



Dragonflies

On March 23, 2017, I lost my loving husband of 41 years from cancer caused by Agent Orange. It was a long, painful death. While I thanked God for taking him where there was no pain, I was devastated. He was gone, and I was lost. The only things that kept me going were my three children and my 7-yr. old granddaughter, Ariaah.

One day in August my son, Jason, his child Ariaah, and his girlfriend Sara went to visit Papa's grave. While Jason and Sara stood by the grave, Ariaah started chasing a dragonfly. It was as if the dragonfly and Ariaah were playing together. When they got home Sara and Jason said that they really believed Papa had been playing with Ariaah. That reminded me of times when Lee and Ariaah would chase dragonflies in our yard. That evening I went downstairs to our basement where I had been going through photos and cards, mostly to feel my husband's presence. I picked up an unopened box, and on top of the papers was an anniversary card that Lee had written for me on our 30th anniversary. On the outside was a picture of a beautiful dragonfly, and on the inside was a poem that he had written himself.

*Know that there will come a time
When our love will whisper
In the beating wings of golden dragonflies
In the warm silence of summer mornings.*

I was overcome with a feeling of peace and joy, because I knew that Lee was with me. Unfortunately, a month later, on Sept. 10, 2017, my dear, sweet Jason was taken away from me, too. He had overdosed on heroin, laced with fentanyl. I found him dead

in his apartment. It was a nightmare that will never go away. Initially, I thought it was a suicide, because he had suffered from treatment-resistant depression most of his life and had talked about suicide on several occasions. However, it was determined that his death wasn't intentional, and a trial is coming up on, believe it or not, the first anniversary of Jason's death.

I was shocked and again devastated having to say good-bye to my first-born child. How could this be happening again so soon? While preparing for Jason's funeral, my sister and I stopped at my home for a while. As I was standing on my porch waiting for my sister, a dragonfly started flying over my head and in front of me. I felt like I was watching a show. It got so close to me that I could have picked it up. Amazingly, a short while later another dragonfly joined the first one. Both flew around me for about 10 minutes. They would fly singly and then come together, always very close to me. Finally, they circled once more and then flew away side by side. I have no doubt that they were my husband and son telling me that they were together and free from pain. It was comforting and gave me the strength to get through another funeral.

The morning of the funeral was cold and rainy, certainly not a day for dragonflies. Jason was laid to rest close to his dad. Seeing them together was more than I could take, but as I began to cry, a dragonfly flew right over Jason's coffin, swirling around and around. And then the second one arrived and started swirling around, too! Everyone there had heard about the two dragonflies earlier that week, and when the two dragonflies flew away together, everyone started clapping and clapping. It was one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever had and one that I will never forget.

As I approach the first anniversary of Jason's passing, I feel the emotions that are still so strong and painful, and I know that it will be a very difficult time. But I hope it will also bring back memories of that last day and remem-

ber the joy I felt as Jason left this earth with his dad. I am hoping that they will both be with me as I face the trial for the man responsible for my son's death.

There have been other signs this past year when I have felt their presence, and I will continue to look for them. If you are open to miracles happening, look for signs of your own precious children who are right beside you. It might happen when you least expect it, but you will feel peace, knowing that they are waiting for you in that most perfect place on the other side of the rainbow.

I am so sorry for your losses.

Pam Vogels

*TCF Green Bay, WI In Memory of my son,
Jason And husband Lee*

When Words Become Gifts

On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag—are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation, "Yes, I am!" With those three, almost magical, words this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was saying David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am, and always will be, Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to

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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 Snapp 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 Christ-mas.

• 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 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

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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, November 2 at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: The ending months of the year are filled with dreaded holidays for bereaved parents. How do you cope? Are there changes you have made in how you celebrate any of these holidays?

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 Golden in memory of **Andrew Golden**: “We love and miss you! Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff, Blair, Rose and Teddy”; “I can’t believe it’s been 7 years! It seems like forever. Love You, Mom”; “We love and miss you Uncle Andrew!”
 - ♥ Sharon Black in memory of **Jordan**; “Love and miss you more each day. Mom, Dad, Stephanie & Little Jordan”
 - ♥ Brenda Fields in memory of **Jordan John Fields**; “Always on my mind and in my heart. Love, Mom”
-

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Continued from page 5 - When Words.....

share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven’t been any truly easy, carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most “doable” way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more

than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters most to us.

The real treasure comes when others introduce our children’s names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our sons and daughters have left to us and to the world.

Nita Aasen In memory of my sons, Erik and David Aasen St. Peter, Minnesota

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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 Snepp

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

November 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

