

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2026
Volume 38, Number 10



The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

Chapter Leaders

Joyce Gradinscak
Mary Hartnett
(734-778-0800)

Newsletter Editor

Brenda Brummel
10531 Calumet Trail
Gaylord, MI 49735
810-623-1691
bbwriter59@aol.com

Treasurer

Mary Hartnett
5704 Drexel
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

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:

October 1st - - 7:00 pm - Meeting:
see page 7 for more info

**October 20th -Tuesday, at 6:00
pm. TCF Dinner at: Archie's
Tavern 37714 Six mile Rd.
Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park
Mall.**

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

**No Craft meeting until further
notice.**

Halloween...Still a Holiday to Remember

Two Halloweens have now passed since my 8-year-old Stephanie and 5-year-old Stephen left us to live with God. Even before the kids were old enough to go trick or treating, I still recall their delight at the costumes worn by all the neighborhood kids who came to the door. I still remember how thrilled Stephen was to be handing out the candy when he was only one and half years old. We still have a picture of him holding the plate of goodies. If you look close, you can see where he took a bite out of one of the candy bars (with the wrapper on) and set it back on the plate.

I can still remember the all too few times I was able to take my children out trick-or-treating. I remember my daughter dressed up as a nurse, offering to "fix-up" all those other trick or treaters who were obviously hurting with all that fake blood they were wearing. I remember Stephen wearing his great pumpkin outfit. We stuffed it so full of padding that when he fell down, not only did he not get hurt, he had to be physically picked up because he was flailing his arms around like a beetle on its back.

I can still see Stef holding Stephen's

little hand and patiently leading him up the walkway and helping him hold open his bag so that the candy would find its mark. She always made certain he said thank you for the candy. It usually came out "thank-woo."

The first Halloween following their deaths I remember driving home with tears streaming down my face as I watched the other trick-or-treaters roaming up and down the streets.

My wife and I fled our home, depositing bags of candy for our next door neighbors to hand out for us. Last year we found the courage to stick around and greet the ghosts and goblins who found their way to our door. The funny thing was, we felt as dressed up as the trick-or-treaters. We were wearing our "happy face" masks. The memories are now starting to fade of the Halloweens before our children died. It won't be too long and I'll be leading Christopher, our new son who is now a year old, up those driveways just like I did before. I feel sad that Stef and Steve can't be there. But you know, I have a feeling that if I hold out my hands and close my eyes, two little gloved hands will slip into mine and I'll again hear in unison, "Just one more house Daddy!"

Wayne Loder
TCF Lakes Area, MI
In Memory of Stephanie and Stephen
Loder

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.

Child	Parent, Grandparent, Sibling	Date	Age
Jenifer Lynn Tisch	Connie Bagalis	October 20	39 yrs
Idones	Jettowynne Barnes	October 26	37 yrs
Jeffrey	Kris Barry	October 03	34 yrs
Christopher Paul Bonnici	Sharon Bergeron	October 26	29 yrs
Anthony	Debra Blackledge	October 28	39 yrs
Michael Gagnon	Mary Bodnar	October 27	23 yrs
Christopher	Jerry Bonnici	October 26	29 yrs
Amy Louise Blackwood	Beth Bouchard	October 11	24 yrs
Jacob Robert	Molly Brink	October 23	19 yrs
Ronald	Yvette Broda-Kaczynski	October 03	22 yrs
Jeffry Kucharski	Mary Burkett	October 25	31 yrs
Michael	Jerry and Nancy Burton	October 05	26 yrs
Mitchell	Doug and Amy Butler	October 05	14 yrs
Ian	Al and Michelle Clemens	October 25	17 yrs
Nicole	Wendi & Greg Clouse	October 16	20 yrs
Nicholas E. Cocora, Jr.	Flora A. Cocora	October 03	53 yrs
Adam Sebastian	Kristine Connell	October 12	15 yrs
Gabriel Cormer-Bridgeforth	Arlene Cormer	October 12	24 yrs
Alec	Tom and Gina Cunningham	October 22	15 yrs
Zachary	Michelle Darling	October 21	14 yrs
Christen	Mike and Sheryl Edwards	October 13	20 yrs
Brian	Denise and Christopher Falzon	October 01	19 yrs
Mark	Carol Florkowski	October 27	49 yrs
Jeff	Doug & Nancy Fortier	October 28	26 yrs
Jeff	Lindsay Fortier	October 28	26 yrs
Christopher Paul Bonnici	Frank & Michelle Foster	October 26	29 yrs
Lori	Bob and Mary Ann Furca	October 25	32 yrs
Allen	Dori Harris	October 15	29 yrs
Michael	Mike and Mary Hartnett	October 05	18 yrs
Courtney Nicole	John and Brenda Hernandez	October 02	18 yrs
Dan	Dave and Linda Houghtby	October 30	17 yrs
Kimberly Erin Welch	Chris and Patty Ibbetson	October 07	31 yrs
Andrew	Roman and Monica Imielowski	October 10	26 yrs
Mark Richard	Veronica & Arthur Juarez	October 24	52 yrs
Mark Richard	Wendy Juarez	October 24	52 yrs
Kristin Eun-Sook	Eric & Katherine Keydel	October 03	31 yrs
Olivia	Jacgui Aronoff & Michael Kinsella	October 07	20 yrs
Amanda	Frannie & Samantha Kish	October 22	18 yrs
Sara	Eileen Kolodin	October 30	34 yrs
Nicole Clouse	Candy Mallia	October 16	20 yrs
Jillian White	John and Shelley McDermott	October 17	15 yrs
Wiley Garrick Moss	Lisa Moss	October 01	22 yrs
Katelyn Albig	Denise Mouro	October 14	22 yrs
Gabe	Eliazbeth & Gabrio Mulatti	October 03	42 yrs
Steve Nagle	Kirk and Suzanne Nagle	October 21	24 yrs
Matthew	Judy Nesler	October 02	3 days
Jenna Kay	Laura Neumann	October 25	20 yrs
Jennie	Julie Pack	October 18	24 yrs
Steven	Hal and Lynn Pape	October 10	18 yrs
Jarrold	Dawn Podsiad	October 1	38 yrs
Alisa Sumner	Louis Randall	October 30	44 yrs
Kristin	Lois Rodgers	October 2	51 yrs
John David	Debbie Ross	October 4	28 yrs
Linda Ross	Diane Ross	October 18	33 yrs
Navi	Harvinder and Jasvinder Sahi	October 14	21 yrs



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

In the Presence of An Absence

Sometimes I lie awake nights thinking about ways to describe what it feels like. But how can we describe a black hole? That's a concept I never understood. And I suppose, that's as close to an apt description as I will ever get. I don't know why it's able to metaphorically describe it. But somehow, once the absence of your child enters your life, it becomes so big, so palpable, so incomprehensible, so always there, that we spend the rest of our lives trying to understand it by adequately describing it.

Being absent is not being there. But our child's absence creates a presence that is more constant than if they were actually physically there. Perhaps it is the unnatural permanence of their absence that creates a presence that we can-not put aside. That "neverness" so poignantly described by Nicholas Wolterstorff in his "Lament For A Son". Some relate it to the story of "the elephant in the room". It is an invisible presence that only we can feel. Those who care about us may believe, as time goes on, that we are functioning without that presence. But we know that the absence caused by the death of our children creates a void that is almost physical – an invisible black hole in which we carry all the love, the heartache, the grief, the disbelief, the anger, the longing for our lost child – and only we can see it and feel it.

As we negotiate ourselves through the coming of the Holiday season, the presence of the absence we live with on a daily basis, becomes an even heavier burden. Reluctant to worry those who love us with the overwhelming sadness brought on by the onslaught of joyousness, we put on a brave face and do our best to participate in the season.

But their absence is always present. And that absence seems even bigger than the actual presence of our children, had they lived. It's a quandary, this need to adequately describe what

we're feeling. Volumes have been written in our attempts to make the uninitiated "get it" and introduce the newly bereaved to what lies ahead to assure them that they are not losing their minds, only discovering for themselves what none of us have been able to describe. I've said it before – there's a chemical change that enables us to feel the pain of this particular despair. No other sadness compares. And that is why we can only describe these sensibilities in metaphor.

Though most can relate to the loss of a parent, a pet, or a friend, only those who live it can relate to the loss of a child. And I guess that is why we all keep trying to describe the indescribable. We think once we describe it sufficiently, civilians will feel the intensity of our despair and we'll be understood by everyone and forgiven for feeling as we do and for changing into the people we become. It's a puzzlement.

So here we go again. Plunging into the season of joy. Remember this season, it's all about you. Be kind to yourself. Be gentle to yourself. Our children are still with us. Wrapping us all in a big, warm, cuddly hug. Feel it.

Marie Levine

Bring My Child Back to Me

Whisper, whisper, wind in the woods,
Bring back my child, here where he stood,
Let him laugh, let him shout, let him giggle with glee,
Wind in the woods, bring my child back to me.

Silence of morning, dew on the grass,
Give me peace in my soul, let this time pass.
Let my child sit beside me, let the two of us be,
Silence of morning, bring my child back to me.

Middle of the night, so dark and so still,
Let me relax and remember at will,

Let my child in my thoughts drift forever to see,
Middle of the night bring my child back to me.

Sunrise and sunset, beginning and end,
Give me a day with my child, my friend.

We'll run on the beach, we'll play in the sea,
Sunrise and sunset, bring my child back to me.

Memories, memories here in my head.
Don't ever leave me, even though my child's dead.

Keep him alive, keep him strong, keep him free.

Memories of mine, bring my child back to me

*Barbara Patterson
TCF Conquitlam, BC*

Do You Know Who I Am?

I am flesh and blood, torn mind,
and broken heart.

I feel at times like a wise old woman – but then, in the next moment like a small child.

I admit total confusion. I look in the mirror and see someone I'm not sure I know. I want an answer; I want a solution – to a problem that has neither on this earth.

It seems that nothing matters anymore and yet at the same time I have learned that everything does. That there are billions of people on this earth. When one of them dies, it matters.

I ache to a degree that only another who has crossed this bridge could gauge. And only they can for a moment understand my torment.

Do you know who I am?

I am a bereaved mother – the last thing I ever thought I would be. My child has died before me, the most unnatural thing in the word. And my continued being seems the next most unnatural thing in the world.

A portion of my heart, spirit, and dreams – and all thoughts of total peace, are with Ryan, never to be recovered to make a whole until I see him again.

The tears I cry are not for me, but for the beautiful life that ended far too soon. And the utterly helpless frustration of not being able to do anything to change that.

*Deborah Wiseman,
TCF of Nashville, TN*

For Grieving Parents

I am a mother. I am a bereaved mother. My child died, and this is my reluctant path. It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the places that scare me. Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily, or I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me.
Say nothing.
Do not offer a cure.
Or a pill, or a word, or a potion.
Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me.
Please be gentle with me.
And I will try to be gentle with me too.

I will not ever "get over" my child's death so please don't urge me down that path. Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am even able to smile again, the pain is just beneath the surface. There are days when I still feel paralyzed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and, sometimes, I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

Losing my child affects me in so many ways: as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. There are days when I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore.

Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more- hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child- or an elderly person struggling with the door. There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? There are some questions, I've learned, which are simply unanswerable.

So please don't tell me that "God has a plan" for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own child into a safe, warm bed at night: Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when "goodbye" means you'll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers- and fathers- and grandparents- and siblings won't wake up one day with everything 'okay' and life back to normal. I have a new normal now. As time passes, I may gain gifts, and treasures, and insights but anything gained was too high a cost when compared to what was lost. Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child's absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder, don't forget that I have another one,

another child, whose absence, like the sky, is spread over everything as C.S. Lewis said. My child may have died; but my love - and my motherhood - never will.

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore

Grief Triggers

It doesn't matter whether you have been on your grief journey for 10 years or 10 hours—at some point, you have likely experienced grief triggers. Grief triggers are situations, sensations, or reminders that bring back thoughts and feelings related to a loss.

For me, the most fascinating are sensory grief triggers. These are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, or other sensory experiences that unexpectedly stir emotions connected to someone or something you've lost. Because our brains form strong connections between memories and our senses, a simple sensory cue can bring back vivid memories and powerful emotions, even many years after a loss. These reactions often feel sudden, unexpected, and deeply emotional.

It's important to remember that sensory grief triggers are a normal part of the grieving process. They do not necessarily mean your grief is getting worse. More often, they reflect the depth of the love, connection, and memories you shared.

When a grief trigger arises, many people find these approaches helpful: •Name what's happening.

Simply acknowledging the experience—"This song is reminding me of them"—can make the emotional wave feel less confusing and more manageable.

• Allow yourself to feel the emotion.

Grief often comes in waves. Trying to push the feelings away can sometimes make them more intense. Giving yourself permission to experience the emotion without judgment can help it move through you more naturally.

•Reconnect with the present moment.

SIBS

10 Things Everyone Should Know About Siblings & Grief

There are many things people need to learn about siblings and grief. Here are ten I would like everyone to know.

1) Sibling grief is often misunderstood—by parents, families, friends, and counselors, even by the siblings themselves. So much focus is given to the parents of the lost child, to the children of the lost parent, to the spouse of the lost adult sibling. And, rightly so. But, what about the siblings? What about the ones who, like me, have grown up with the deceased? Who believed they would have a lifetime with their sister or brother? Who now face that lifetime alone?

2) Sibling grief “has been almost

entirely overlooked in the literature on bereavement.” It’s no wonder, therefore, that even mental health providers misunderstand sibling grief. How are families supposed to know how to help siblings through grief if even the research on the subject is lacking?

3) Common emotions siblings may feel when a brother or sister dies include: Guilt

Abandonment

Loss of Innocence

Fallout from the Family

Somatic Symptoms

Fears and Anxiety

4) Siblings may feel “trumped” by the grief of other family members. I sure felt this way, and it’s common, since the focus is usually on the parents if a young sibling dies and on the surviving spouse or children if an older sibling dies. This may lead to minimizing a sibling’s own loss.

5) Young siblings lose innocence

when a brother or sister dies, which may lead to fears and anxiety; “Survivor guilt” is also common. Experiencing death as a child becomes a lifelong experience of processing and understanding the loss. Children grow up with grief, understanding more as they get older. Fear of death or dying is common. Anxiety or worry about getting sick may become prevalent. In young siblings, guilt for provocative behavior or for unacceptable feelings (jealousy) is common. Young children may think, before the death, “I wish my brother were dead!” then believe they somehow caused it to happen. Older siblings may wonder, “Why them and not me?” Because siblings are usually similar in age, it can bring up many questions about the sibling’s own life and death, and guilt along with it.

6) Surviving children do, unfortunately, end up taking the fallout from parents’, siblings’, or other family members’ mistakes, emotional blowups, or neglect. In many ways, siblings often experience a double loss: the loss of their sister or brother, and the loss of their parents (at least for a time, but sometimes, permanently). I know this from experience. Though my parents did the best they could, after my youngest sister died, our entire family was different. My mom retreated into her own grief, staying in her room, depressed and sick for years. My dad retreated into work and anything to take his mind from his pain. Luckily, I was already on my own, in college, at the time; my younger siblings weren’t so lucky. At 9, 11, 14, and 17 years old, they grew up with a completely different set of parents than I had. I tried to step in as a “parent” figure over the years, but the separation from

Continued on page 7

Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings

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

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

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: PO Box 46, Wheaton, IL. 60187

Phone: (877)969-0010; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: mfedel2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room) 1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; tcfannarbormich.org

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

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

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, October 1st at 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables. Topic Have you ever found the words to describe your grief. What are some words to describe how you have felt?

A Love Gift -No dues or fees are required to belong to The Compassionate Friends. We have all paid the ultimate price, the loss of our loved ones. Parents and others may provide financial support for our chapter through Love Gifts. It is a beautiful loving way to remember our loved ones. Love Gift form is on back page.

Mike and Mary Harnett in memory of their son, **Michael**; "Michael, 12 years without you seems like forever. We miss you so much! Love you, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn."

Robert White in memory of his daughter, **Jillian**; "Jillybean-Even though you've been gone for many years, I still think of you every day. I love and miss you!! Dad

Tom and Connie McCann in memory of **Ryan (Ryfro)**; "Happy Birthday 10/26 we love & miss you."

Tom and Connie McCann in memory of Our sons **Ryan "Ryfro"**, **Tom Jr.**, **Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis considered as a son to our family**, **Mark "Sparky" Abbott**, **Joe Coffey** & **Jim "Jimmy" Vick**.

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

my parents in their time of need profoundly influenced their lives. It profoundly influenced my life. It profoundly changed our family.

7) Siblings may manifest somatic symptoms of grief, including symptoms that mimic the deceased sibling's symptoms. Especially in young children, symptoms like stomachaches, headaches, nightmares, body pain, digestive symptoms, and trouble sleeping are common. These should be seen as symptoms of grief, and hopefully, an adult in the family can help siblings work through their feelings and show them how to grieve.

8) Having someone explain the loss to younger siblings, to be there for them and help them grieve, is ideal. Little

children don't comprehend death in the same way adults do. It is therefore important to have somebody who can walk them through the loss and the grief process, to explain it wasn't their fault, to validate what they feel. If parents aren't able to do so, another family member or friend may, and hopefully will, step in.

9) Even adult siblings will feel the loss deeply. The pain isn't less simply because you're older. In fact, in many ways, it's harder. You understand more. You know what it means to die, and you will feel the pain of the loss in a different way than young children, who still haven't developed abstract thinking

and understanding, will. Grieve your loss. If you're not sure how, here are some ideas.

10) My best advice for siblings in grief: Feel the loss as long as you need to, and give yourself time to heal. Because sibling loss is so misunderstood, you may receive messages that make you feel like you should be "over it by now." They don't know sibling loss. Now, you do. It takes time. Lots of time. It's not about "getting over" the loss of a sibling. You don't get over it. You create your life and move on, when you're ready. But you will always remember your brother or sister—the missing piece of your life.

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

October 2026

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

Engage in a simple grounding activity, such as taking a walk, stretching, focusing on your breathing, or holding a comforting object. These small actions can help you stay connected to the present while making space for your feelings.

Grief triggers may never disappear completely, but over time they often become less overwhelming. While they can catch us off guard, they also remind us of the meaningful connections that continue to live in our hearts. Learning to recognize and respond to these moments with compassion can help us navigate grief with greater understanding and resilience.

We are always here! We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends. Never Lose Hope,

The chapter would like to express its sympathy to Pat and Janet O'Donnell in the loss of their son, Andy. Pat was the Livonia chapter leader for many years, the chairman of the national conference held in Dearborn, and the president of the national board. For many years, he was also a primary part of the annual Candle Lighting. Pat and Janet have helped countless people with their grief. We send them heartfelt thoughts and hugs.