

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2023
Volume 35, Number 10

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:

October 5- Monthly Chapter
Meeting see page 7

**October 17- 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

Website: <https://www.tcflivonia.org>

Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment and children's pleasure. Gremlins and goblins and ghosties at the door of your house; and the "other children" come to the door of your mind. Faces out of the past, small ghosts with sweet, painted faces. They do not shout. Those children no longer march laughing on a cold Halloween night. They stand at the door of your mind; and you will let them in, so that you can give them the small gifts for Halloween: a smile and a tear.
Sascha Wagner, from Wintersun



My Witch and My Angel

For Zoë Halloween is just about as good as it gets. Not much in my daughter's world beats candy, costumes, friends, make-up, and staying up late even on a school night. Life at age six

can be gloriously simple.

But I don't know much of what my son Max thought of Halloween. When he died at age two, he only had one real "trick-or-treat" to his credit. That year—1987—I dressed him in a pumpkin costume and we traipsed to a few neighbors. I took far too many pictures.

Max was a fiend for sweets and with the candy ration lifted for the evening, he had to be living well.

I imagine that year would have been his last dressed as a mommy-pleasing pumpkin. At three or four I knew he would demand Ninja or pirate costumes; I would have laughingly bought them and maybe even the plastic sword. I would have let him paint grotesque stitches across his nose and wear fangs that glowed in the dark.

Instead, this is Zoë's year to cast aside the girly version of Max's pumpkin cap. The beloved pink princess frills and red nail polish are being exchanged for a witch hat and black glue-on fingernails sharpened into talons. For the first time, she wants to be Scary and Ugly. With mahogany lipstick and smoky eyes, she will fly out the door in less than a month to cross one more threshold that her brother did not.

I can see the evening now. As I assemble face paints on the counter, I will take a deep breath—the same one I take every year at every holiday and milestone. With my unsteady hand I will de-

(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

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
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Names available to members

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

sign witchy warts and create wrinkles on Zoë's perfect face. I will declare her the Scariest and Ugliest of All.

But as I help my little witch into her costume, I know my eyes will fill with tears. I will think about the years that were supposed to be: a young boy as Dracula, a 13 year-old teen in baggy clothes escorting his little witch-sister down the block. Who would he be now, the toddler we knew, the boy we lost? What would our life be like if the scary things were still just make-believe?

Zoë will see my tears, but she won't be alarmed: in our family's emotional lexicon, sad and happy often go together and crying is as OK as laughing. She will ask me why I'm sad and I will tell her the truth: I am thinking about Max and wishing he could be here. And although she is now the mean and fierce Witch Zoë, she will nod her head with understanding. Her plastic nails will lightly graze my arm as she reaches to pat me. Suddenly the frown on her face will disappear and she repeats what has become her annual Halloween revelation: "Mommy, it's OK. Don't forget that Max can go 'trick-or-treat' as an angel." She describes a glittering figure, luminous wings aflutter, giant treat bag at the ready. I smile at the idea and the moment passes.

Later, I light the candle in the pumpkin and watch Zoë skip next door to show off her costume. She heads up the sidewalk, stopping halfway to turn and wave to me. She makes her scariest face and yells, "Mom—take my picture!" I raise my camera and look through the viewfinder. As the flash glows briefly in the dusk, I see a beautiful angel standing in the shadows beside her. But this angel doesn't wear white and his wings have been clipped. I am sure he never had a golden halo. He is a small chubby boy with a jack-o-lantern face on his tummy and chocolate on his fingers. It is 1987 and he is having a really great Halloween.

©1999 by Mary Clark

In memory of Max TCF, Sugarland, TX

My "Chris" Birds

It's the twigs below the birdhouse
Lets me know your birthday's near
This back yard once sat empty
Not a bird in sight all year

We placed the houses in our yard
To give the birds a home
But never did we see one
Till the day that you went home

We looked outside on that day
We laid you in the ground
On that dark day in September
The starlings swarmed around

We had never seen so many
Certainly not in our back yard
But there they were aplenty
On that day that was so hard

They came again in the Spring
Round your birthday, the end of
March
The starlings flew around again
Bringing twigs, a home to start

So March and in September
Are special months indeed
The starlings come to see us
They recognize our need

Because they came when you left
They were never here before
I've named them after you my son
Your legacy, I'm sure

So, it's these twigs below the bird-
house
That lets me know that you are near
My "Chris birds" come a-callin
Reminding me of you so dear
Robyn Kingery
In Memory of my son, Chris Kingery

It's Okay to Laugh:

Laughter is not a sign of "less" grief. Laughter is not a sign of "less" love. It's a sign that many of our thoughts and memories are happy ones. It's a sign that we know our dear one would have us laugh. It's okay to laugh.

Marianne Waite, TCF, El Paso, TX



Incongruities

Thoughts of you can
bring a smile to my face
...and tears to my eyes.
Memories of you tug at my heart fill-
ing it with love
...and longing.
I feel so thankful
for having had you in my life
...and yet so sad that you are gone.
I'm comforted by the sense of your
presence surrounding me at times
...while loneliness overwhelms me.
My life is filled with incongruities;
they assure me I am healing
...and that I never will.

*Gayle Block TCF -
Baytown, Texas*

The Silver Lining

It is such a shame that someone
we love must pass away for us to see
things in a different light, but I guess
that is how life works sometimes.

My family members and I have
heard Sarah talking to us loud and
clear, what we should have learned
from her while she was here and how
we should be conducting our lives.
Sarah Rose, my only child, passed
away June 12, 2017, after falling
asleep at the wheel. She was just 25
years old.

Since then, I feel like a different
person entirely. Besides the obvious
negative changes to my life, I have
also become aware of some positive
changes in my thinking and personal-
ity. This is the silver lining, I guess, no
matter how tarnished. The things that
I thought were the utmost importance
before Sarah left us, are so NOT im-
portant now. It's almost painful when
I think back to what I obsessed about

at the time and how closed minded I was. I could have been having heart-to-heart talks with Sarah and listening, really listening, to what she had to say. I could have been telling her things about her childhood and about my childhood that she didn't know. "Could have, would have, should have" ... I know. I look at people now, especially people Sarah's age with a much kinder heart. I don't judge people anymore by their appearance or number of tattoos they have. Sarah would always wince at me for voicing my opinion and say, "You don't even know what a great guy he is on the inside!" Today, I am more interested in their "story" and what circumstances have led them to this place in their lives.

Saving money has also lost its importance. I get much more satisfaction out of helping others with things that I know would make their week easier or their day happier. I am grateful that I am financially able to do this.

These days, I also find peace in certain things in nature which before never even caught my attention, the effortlessness of butterflies, the calmness of the deer staring at me from the side of the road on the way to the cemetery, the frequent visits of my resident cardinal, the amazing appearance of rainbows, and the beauty and intricacies of certain flowers.

Why wasn't any of this apparent to me before? So, as you struggle to find meaning and purpose in your life, you might try to take a step back and see what your loved one would want you to be doing now.

Jill Lincoln

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 (what feels like endless) 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

The Beautiful Name of Parent

People often ask why there is not a word for someone who has lost a child. For me the answer is quite simple; I am and always will be a parent. The death of our child does not take that precious title away from any of us. Nothing and no one can ever change the fact that we are parents. We gave life to, nurtured and raised our children, for however long or short their lives were. "Parent" is a living word. It is an eternal word.

Our children would want us to remember that we are their parents now and forever. They would want the name of "parent" that was bestowed on us at their birth to live on in our hearts. We are still actively parenting our children. We continue to bring life to our children by loving them now and forever. There is not and should never be a word to signify the endless love of a parent.

Janet G. Reyes TCF Alamo Area Chapter, TX



To My Husband

Your tears flow within your heart
Mine flow down my face.

Your anger lies with thoughts and movements
Mine gallops for all to see

Your despair shows in your now dull eyes
Mine show in line after written line

You grieve over the death of your son
I grieve over the death of my baby

But we're still the same, still one
Only we grieve at different times

Over different memories
And, at different lengths

Yet we both realize the death of our child.

*Pam Burden
TCF, Augusta, GA*

SIBS

I Miss You

I miss my brother
I miss him every day
I miss getting mad at him.
I miss his sweet ways.
I miss having my brother and me.
I miss him every day.
All the things I miss about him,
Out loud, I can barely say.
It's hard to talk about him.
My throat starts to tighten,
My heart feels weak.
But I'm always thinking about him
And sometimes I feel weak.
I don't talk about him much
Because it hurts so bad.
But when I talk about him
My heart feels free.
I miss my brother and I know

he misses me.
Just because I'm not talking about
him
Doesn't mean I don't miss him,
Every moment, every day.
I miss my brother, John.

I never put this in writing but I remember the day of your funeral. I was in my own little world, I couldn't believe what was happening. For the funeral home we collected pictures of you and made a collage of your life, but I wanted to take more pictures of you later. I didn't want this to be the end.

We had the funeral and everyone showed how much they loved you. I hope you heard my song to you. You were and are the "wind beneath my wings." When we drove to the cemetery, I got out and knew we would lay

you next to dad. Nothing seemed real. When I was sitting there before they were going to bury you, I didn't hear a word anyone said. I was looking at the trees blowing in the wind. I actually felt peace at that moment in time. I felt the wind and knew you were there. A peace I knew you gave. I love you. And I knew you were safe. Thank you for that moment of peace.

*Erica Herbert,
TCF Troy Chapter,
in loving memory of her brother, John
Edward Herbert*

Reflections

With the death of my sister came some painful realizations: that life really isn't fair or predictable; that sometimes even my best still isn't good enough; and that from the day of her death, the happy events in my life would always be tinged with sadness.

Despite the pain and loss, death has also left me with some valuable lessons and precious gifts. As a result of my sister's death, I have a greater appreciation of life and a greater compassion for those who hurt. I have learned to be a survivor and to have a successful career and productive life in the face of tremendous grief and loss. I have been gifted with good friends and special people to help me through the gift of time--to heal and to replace those painful memories of death with the priceless memories of my sister's life.

Cathy Schanberger

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, October 5 at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: October is a time for masks. As bereaved parents we often put on a mask when we are around other people. Compassionate Friends is a group in which you don’t have to wear a mask. Are there other groups with whom you can be honest? Is there a time when you can quit wearing a mask?

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.

- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett in memory of Michael Anthony: “It is so hard to believe we have been without you for 9 years. We love you and miss you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn”
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of our son Ryan (Ryfro) : “Happy Birthday Ryan “Ryfro” 10/26 “We love you & miss you”
In memory of our sons Ryan “Ryfro”, Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis considered as a son to our family,
Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey, Jim “Jimmy” Vick.
-

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.

Janet, whose beloved daughter, **Angela Jones**, born 4/11; died 2/05; 37 years

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Grief... As far as I can see, Grief will never truly end. It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love does – forever. It’s simply the way the absence of your love one manifests in your heart. A deep longing, accompanied by the deepest love. Some days, the heavy fog may return, and the next day, it may recede, once again. It’s all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.
Author unknown

Save the Date!!

Annual Compassionate
Friends Candle-Lighting
December 10 - Kellogg
Park

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. More info to follow.

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

October 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

The Grief Shuffle

It's the saddest dance
Invented by none
Danced by many
But not for fun

Take a step forward
Then two steps back
Step side to side
Try to stay on track

The music will change
It will always be new
The steps are unknown
You won't have a clue

The dance continues
We stumble and fall
we pick ourselves up
And love you through all