

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2024
Volume 36, 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 3 -7:00 pm - see page 7

Tuesday, October 15th at 6:00 pm.
TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern 37714
Six mile Rd. (same place-differnt
name.) Livonia. It is in the Laurel Park
Mall.

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

No Craft meeting this month

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

Save the Date

Annual Compassionate *Friends Candle Lighting*

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

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

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

The Mask of Grief

As the beautiful colors of fall surround us and the air is sweetened and chilled, we, the broken-hearted parents and families of those children who left us too soon begin to find the strength and perseverance to face another season, another anniversary, another rush of memories. Perhaps Halloween brings with it visions of little candy-grabbing goblins and gossamer-clad fair children. Perhaps those memories aren't available

to some of us. All of us pick up our masks right around this time of year and we put them on. Our masks are different, though. When our children died, we discovered that the raw and horrible pain we were in probably showed up on our faces, in the way we stood, in the way we walked and talked. We soon discovered that, even though we had many close and loving friends and family, they were not very comfortable with watching us bleed to death from the inside out...So we constructed a mask.

Masquerade Balls and Pagan ceremonies are ancient rituals. The idea of "masking" one's identity for a short time and celebrating with wild abandon is as appealing in our society as it was in those ancient times. Unfortunately, the bereaved have a different reason for donning the mask. We force our mask to smile when the lump in our throat and the heaviness in our chest threaten to choke us. Our eyes leak profusely, despite the waterproof mascara and pancake makeup we women keep applying. Men put on a stoic and strong façade, sometimes failing miserably and breaking down with terrible beauty.

I urge you to be gentle with your mask. Put it on thoughtfully and take it off with great care.

There are safe places to leave it and one of those places is with those of us who travel this path with you.

Kerry Marston

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

Available to members only



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

Parenting Through a Glass Partition

Raising children and being bereaved makes me feel like I did when I was six years old. My red tights bagged around my ankles, I often had doggy poop on the bottom of my scuffed patent-leather shoes, and I was constantly running to catch the bus. Now, as a mother of three living children and one who died, I feel overwhelmed, forgetful and, to use a word my aunt Mollie often said, discombobulated.

At the fast food restaurant, my children laugh in the play area as I sit drinking coffee behind the glass partition that separates the play area from the dining section. While I have hugged them so tightly their tonsils could pop out, I am still, much of the time, finding myself watching them from a distance. They are mine but so was Daniel, and in the course of a moment I know they could be gone, as he is.

When Rachel, 11, was late coming home from a shopping trip with her grandmother, I thought they had been tied up in traffic, but then my mind leaped off into an insane spin and I was certain she'd been in an accident. My thoughts dove into planning her funeral.

She came home without a scratch, and I gulped my worries away — for the moment.

When my children say, "I love you, Mom," and spontaneously wrap their arms around me, I'm certain this could be the end.

"So you live in fear?" a friend asks. Well, no. I live in reality.

My reality is hearing my children call "Hi, Daniel" when we drive on Interstate 40 near Exit 270, where there's a view of Daniel's Place, what my children have named the cemetery. Ben, at five, older than his older brother ever got to be, asks which of our toys Daniel liked to play with and with a smile on his face, listens as I share a story about Daniel and the Fisher Price fishing rod. Elizabeth,

age four, tells me out of the blue that Daniel isn't dead; he lives with God. Later, she hugs me and says she wishes Daniel was here. She's never been photographed with her oldest brother. She kicked in the womb as Daniel breathed his last. Three months later, this failed-vasectomy child I was certain she'd be severely traumatized, but so far, at age four, she has only been known to tell the neighbor girl she doesn't like her.

My reality is that a part of my heart wanted to be childless when Daniel died so that I could have time to weep and wail without having to meet the demands of exasperated cries, without having to wipe little bottoms and without having to search for tiny shoes and socks. When infant Liz used to wake crying months after Daniel's death, I'd hold her and we'd sob together.

The hole in my heart looms large today. The new school year and Daniel's birthday are just around the corner. I finish my coffee and tell my kids it's time to attend the Open House. While grinning at my children and me, a friend exclaims, "One in middle school, one in kindergarten, and one in preschool! You will be busy." I paste on a phony smile and think, not busy enough. I need my fourth grader. But Daniel, my would-be-nine-year-old, died four years ago before completing a year of preschool.

When we arrive home from the Open House, Ben trips onto the pavement while playing ball and I hold him as he cries and his knee bleeds. Whispering, I assure him, "It is going to be okay." What a luxury to be able to tell my children this line of comfort. For Daniel, with the cancer treatments he had to go through, it was not "okay."

Although I prayed daily he'd be cured, it was beyond my control. A scraped knee will heal.

How do we do it? How do we continue living the role of the nurturing and loving parent with the enormous responsibilities, when at times, we can barely put one foot in front of the other?

Here are some tips that have worked for fellow bereaved parents and me:

- Take breaks. This is easier said than done, I know. But I believe you need more breaks than before the death of your child. Your energy for living has been depleted. If you're home all day with the demands of little ones as I have been, you need time alone. If your spouse is at home all day with the children, he or she needs a break.

- Let anger out in a constructive way. When you find you're constantly yelling at the kids, it's time to figure out another release for anger. Play basketball, go on a walk or bike ride. Shut yourself in a room and write. Use your pent-up frustration to pull weeds in the garden or sweep the garage.

- Learn to apologize — Learn to apologize—often. When you do find yourself unreasonably upset with your children, apologize for your reactions. Grief can make you irrational.

- Hug your kids more—even if the older ones whine and don't want you to. They know now as we do how important hugs and showing our affection really are.

- Talk it out. Tell your children why you are feeling sad or discouraged. If you're having a frustrating day, let them know. Even my little ones could understand that "Mommy or Daddy is sad because she/he misses Daniel."

- Spend time with the kids—one on one—if possible. Just you and your daughter can go shopping or out for ice cream. Don't force talk of her dead brother or sister. Just be together for the sake of spending time together. We focus a lot on our deceased children; our living children need to feel valued, too.

- Don't stifle your children as they grow and grieve in their own ways.
- Write love letters to your surviving children. Sometimes it is easier to convey feelings on paper. Give the letters to your kids or keep them to reread later.

- Share your child who died. He is a

part of the family and his story needs to be told.

• Don't fear your "glass partition" view of parenting. As with the other phases and experiences of grief, honor it, and don't fight it.

You are modeling survival. Even as your tears flow and you are overcome with sorrow, your children can learn this is okay. They will also reflect (although it may be years later) that Mom got out of bed, made us breakfast, shopped for school supplies, and went to our soccer games even when she didn't feel like it. They will learn life is tough and even when the storms hit the hardest, it is possible to live through them.

Believe your surviving children will be all right even as they see you suffering and as they face their own monumental pain. In time, they may learn a deeper sensitivity. Perhaps they will become more compassionate because of their experiences. You can guarantee they're more realistic. Your son or daughter might even become a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

I have to remember that although once laid-back, I was never the perfect parent before Daniel died. I had vices and virtues then, just as I have now. Perhaps grief has helped us become better aware of what we are all about. Listen. There are many negatives, but there is much to smile about now, too. Devotion made us caring and loving parents before, and it can carry us through during this rocky road of bereavement. There is the ability to parent effectively through the glass partition.

Alice J. Wisler

Fall of Memories

Jason died in the summer. Six years have come and gone and still the waves roll in, knocking me to my knees.

This morning, autumn has returned. I can see my breath as it slowly leaves my body. Leaves crackle under my feet and the smell of burning wood fills the air. I don't know why this happens year after year, but as the

season shift and the environment changes, so do I. Instead of that which I have grown accustomed to, I am unexpectedly assaulted by memories that have not surfaced for twelve long months. Suddenly, his first successful antelope hunt greets me in the morning. I relive his soccer games and hot chocolate and the feel of his flannel shirts, still warm from the dryer. I see him grabbing fish from the now dry irrigation canal, jumping in the leaves he had painstakingly raked, and roasting marshmallows by the fire that he always got too close to. Fall has crept into my universe again and camouflaged in its shadow... Jason smiles. And I am sad.

As tears fight their way out into the light of day and I swallow the lump in my throat, I hear Jason asking me "why?" I question why anyone, alive or dead, would ask such a ridiculous question as the obvious answer runs through my mind. I am sad because he is no longer doing these things. He is no longer creating memories. Jason is gone... but he's not. And so I explore the logic and I am once again manipulated into wisdom by my son.

Isn't a memory of my son playing soccer a gift? Do I not cherish the photos of him in his first tuxedo? What memory would I choose to let go of? Which ones have become too oppressive for me to welcome into my life today? Are these memories that bring tears to my eyes full of sadness and depression, or are these memories exactly the same as the day they were forever etched in my heart? Unchanged, created in and surrounded by love.

And so the question waits. Why do I encounter sorrow when Jason's favorite departure line "buh-buuuuuy..." echoes in my mind? If my memories are cherished gifts, filled with joy when they came to be and remaining as such now, what is causing my distress?

The answer is fast, and its simplicity embarrasses me. Memories are miraculous gifts. We receive them without asking, we do absolutely nothing

to earn them, and they are accessible to us without limit. We should honor their creating and invincibility. The cause of my distress is me. It is what I am choosing to feel. I am disregarding the delight that was in his voice. I am overlooking the love that was sent with the words. I am choosing instead to focus on a fear that he is no longer a part of my life.

Fear or love, which will it be?

Next week, I will undoubtedly see a young man driving a new truck down Main Street. He will have a set of antlers peeking over the tailgate, and I will remember Jason. I will remember him with every ounce of my being. At that moment, I will choose to feel sadness or joy. Fear or love, which will it be? In all that we do, this question begs to be acknowledge, and in all that we do, the answer is clear and persistent. Love is the answer... always... and all ways.

Sandy Goodman, author of "Love Never Dies: A Mother's Journey from Loss to Love"

Just One More Day With You, Drew ~

It is a most fervent wish I hold now, close to my heart and it is a secret wish that permeates my very soul. It is simply the one dream that I have not lost, just to have one more day with you, son. It is what keeps me going when things get rough and I grow weary without you here. I think of you and can only imagine how special, how amazing and just how incredible having just one more day with you might be.

Oh, of all of the things I would have to say, and how I would love to look into those sparkling blue eyes and see you smiling back. I would do anything for one more chance to hear your voice and your laughter. How I yearn to see your sweet face and that head of shiny black hair that was all yours. That walk was certainly your own and how unbelievably do I miss it. Son, I miss just to be in your presence and I think I could be happy forever just to hear

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The Measure of a Mann

Have you ever seen a movie where one of the main characters dies in the middle? Right as you are getting into the best part, after the introductions, when you feel like you know the characters and you've started, often subconsciously, to develop possible endings in your head for how things will go? It isn't common. If my life were a movie, it is just reaching its climax. The majority of main characters are already in the picture, and there is some idea of what path I am headed on and where life will take me. There are things to look forward to in my predicted ending, grad school, a wedding, a career and a family. All things I would do with my brother as he enjoyed the same

successes. Well, that was the plan. My brother, Michael Waite Mann, was 25 when he passed away unexpectedly at the end of last February. Who wouldn't turn off that movie, who wants to watch something with such an abrupt transition from a comedic drama to a tragedy? This isn't a film I can turn off. It is my life and I have no choice other than to continue, so I will do the best I can and take comfort in knowing that he is always watching.

Michael was my co-star. Him being my big brother was a given, but him being my best friend and my confidant, that was an added bonus. I know that all of you know the feeling of trying with all of your being to describe your lost loved child, sibling or grandchild, and you will understand what I mean when I say that words simply fail. I cannot fit Michael onto this page. I cannot tell you

what he means to me, or share all of the stories that I think can shine a bit of light onto how wonderful he was. But, maybe that's not such a bad thing. Maybe the fact that I can't describe him, that I can't put it into words, is a testament to how truly amazing he was and how special our relationship was. So as for Michael, I will leave it at that. He was an amazing individual, someone I looked up to so greatly, someone who's every word and opinion I cherished, someone with whom I shared an indescribable bond, and someone who I am incredibly blessed to call my big brother.

Since Michael passed, so many people have told me that they've never known siblings as close as Michael and I, and some have asked me how we got so close. I've spent some time thinking about that question. It wasn't because we were so similar, because we have always been very different. It wasn't because we always got along, and it didn't mean we didn't fight growing up. It is a direct reflection of what phenomenal parents we have.

As different as Michael and I were, one common thread is that we have always known how fortunate we are to have the parents that we do. Michael and I wouldn't have known the value of such support and consideration if they had not led by example – at every meet, every game, calling just to say hi and see how things were going. My parents continue to lead by example. They are steadfast in their ways of honoring Michael, pushing through, carrying each other and me

To my parents: when you look at me and wish I didn't hurt like I do – don't. That would mean that Michael and I wouldn't have had the relationship that we did. That relationship was the most amazing gift in the world. The depth

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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
- 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: 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

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

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, October 3rd at 7:00 pm. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: After reading One More Day, can you envision one more day with your child, grandchild or sibling? Would you be willing to share what you envision?

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

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**; “Michael, you have been gone 10 years and there is not a day that goes by that we don’t miss you! Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn”
 - ♥ Judy Cappelli in memory of **Christopher**; “The hardest part of missing you for the last 10 years is thinking about all the things you are missing. It breaks my heart. You are not here. I love you, Christopher.”
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of: **Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis, Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey**; “I love these Jim “Jimmy” Vick; “Happy Birthday Ryan “Ryfro” 10/26 we love you and miss you.”
-

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.

Helen King, whose beloved grandson, **Mariano Burgos**, born 7/8; died 7/18; 27 years

(continued from Page 6 - *The Measure of a Mann*)

of my grief is one measure of the man Michael was. The strength that I have comes from you. Thank you for all that you do and for keeping me going in the worst days of my life. I am so grateful to have the two of you and know that Michael would be proud of us for sticking together, though he would expect nothing less.

People say I am early in my grief to be taking on the task of newsletter editor, and I am, but Michael encouraged me in all that I did, and I know that his heart would break at the thought of me not challenging myself to accomplish more. So on the hardest days I keep pushing, for him. Knowing I’m living with two hearts means I will live this

life with twice the passion, twice the courage and twice the love. Twice the drive, twice the motivation and twice the compassion will allow me to accomplish twice the dreams, his and mine, and I will do it all in his honor. I hope he enjoys the show.
Meredith Mann

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

October 2024

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,
please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel

LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Love Gift Donation of \$ _____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

Direct my gift to: _____ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web
_____ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

you say the word “Mom” one more day, Oh just once!

Sometimes, I look up to the stars at night and wonder if you know just how much I miss you. I day dream and often try to picture how we might spend one more day. I truly can’t help myself. We could go fishing, to the mountains, or any place at all. Wherever it might be, without a doubt, it would be the happiest day of my life.

The love I have for you still carries on and carries me through, while our Father is taking care of you. You see, I can’t fathom anything, here on earth that I could ever or would ever want more now than to have just one more day with you, Drew. You rained sunshine on my world and made the colors stand out ever so bright. So, I am going to keep holding on to my dream very tight. It does not matter son, wherever we would go, or whatever we might do, as long as I could be with you ...

Just One More Day.

Remembering you, Son this day and always, Your Mother Forever
Carole Adams