

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2025
Volume 37, 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 2nd-7:00 pm - Meeting:
see page 7

October 21st, 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.

***Please see page 8 about
your continuing to receive
the newsletter.***

I know how you feel...

My life went off the rails in 1993. At the time I was entering middle age, had enjoyed a successful career, and continued on what seemed a prosperous trajectory. I had been married for 29 interesting years and had the most fabulous son who was about to enter adulthood; handsome, smart, educated, healthy and wise (for a 22 year old). I often voiced my gratitude to the fates for my good fortune. Big mistake. They heard me - and offended by my hubris - they smacked me down like a bug that had landed blissfully in their unsullied world.

It was August 8th. Visiting with my sister in California, she and I had spent a glorious summer day in Carmel, returning home exhausted and settling in with my brother-in-law to watch a movie when the phone rang. Unaware that my life as I knew it was about to end, my sister and I continued watching while he went to answer the phone. It was 9 PM. Midnight in New York.

Unbeknownst to me, while my sister and I were romping around Carmel during the afternoon, my husband had called looking for me. (It was 1993 - no cell phones). When my brother-in-law took the call, Phil was forced to tell him the news but asked that he not tell me, saying he would call me that evening. He waited until midnight in New York so that I could have one

last day....thus, greeted normally when we returned from our fun day, I had no clue that anything was amiss. That Peter had been dead for 24 hours. When the phone rang at 9 PM, I reluctantly went to the phone when my brother-in-law interrupted the movie to tell me that Phil was calling. Looking back on that moment, remembering that he knew what was about to happen.....

I'm recalling this now as I anticipate the 23rd summer since that fateful day. Though I don't remember all the details of subsequent days, I remember vividly what I felt that day as my mind shattered and I watched myself from a distance that only an out-of-body experience could provide. The disbelief, confusion and physical pain that sent me screaming and flailing about remain a memory that can be recalled at will. The hopelessness - and later, the sense that my entire life to that point had been a waste. The future I had anticipated was gone in a flash and with it went the hope that my own life would have mattered. My son Peter was my whole reason for being. Without him, I believed all was lost.

Thinking I was singularly devastated, I was only mildly comforted at my first TCF meeting. Introduced to parents who were only one or two years ahead of me, I actually thought they were probably "over it". Ha! Amazing looking back, that I could even have thought

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.

Let Us Remember Them Always

Child

Parent, Grandparent, Sibling

Date

Age

Names available to members only...



October

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

that. Then again, I had lost Peter - the mostest, best, biggest, wonderfulest, most amazing son ever! My grief could never be survived. I returned again and again. Meeting after meeting I railed at the heavens, sharing my anguish with other newly bereaved parents who, like me, believed they were singularly devastated.

In time, I began to realize that the pain of losing a child weighs the same to each and every newly bereaved parent - no matter the age, the size, the circumstances. As my fellow travelers and I shared our experiences and tried to articulate a sensibility that has no language, I recognized how universal this particular grief is - and how unsettling it is to be unable to describe it. We never stop trying and sometimes our metaphors come close.

One day one of my compassionate friends came up to me at a meeting and thanked me for something I said. They told me how it had helped them and how they had shared what I said with many of the people in their support system. Later, reflecting on that conversation I felt a glimmer of - dare I say it - hope? I had helped someone! I had been journaling since the beginning. Maybe I could share what I was feeling by sharing my writing. My healing began then.

As bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings, we are all comfortable with each other because we really know what it feels like. We don't have to try desperately to describe this pain, anguish and confusion to each other. We know exactly how it feels. No mindless attempts to comfort can be found here. Only validation. Like survivors of a distant war, we are trenchmates... we know what it feels like to have our world blow up. We know what it feels like to be surrounded by family and friends who cannot imagine what we are suffering or how we are forever changed. We know what it feels like to reenter an unknowing world. We know what it feels like to be submerged in a world of expectations - a world that expects us to move on, put the past behind us, give up our

future plans and reinvent ourselves on short notice, or at least return to them as the people we once were.

Yes, I do know how you feel. As time has worked it's magic on me and softened the constant ache and replaced it with breathtaking longing - I continue to reach out to new travelers whose path leads to our world. I try to assure them that they won't forget, they are not alone, time is their friend - they will survive. Eventually we all learn how to live the rest of our lives with our absent children forever present in our broken hearts.

Marie Levine

Hidden Emotion

Hidden deep inside my breast is a longing that has been suppressed. The feeling is always there---longing---longing to see you, to hug you, to know who you are at this time in your existence. It stays hidden for a period of time and then---when I least expect it--- rises to the surface and must be tended to.

At times I feel as if I cannot breathe, as if I will suffocate trying to suppress the pain. At other times a tear comes from nowhere and trickles down my cheek. Occasionally, something inside of me explodes causing me to weep uncontrollably.

I can only guess what causes these unbidden emotions. Is it the song that's playing on the radio? Can it be the changing of the seasons? Do the budding trees beginning new life cause me to let down my guard? The longing never goes away.

I feel like a tight rope walker never knowing if I will make a misstep, causing me to fall into the stream of emotional pain that forces me to cry out, as I long to see you again.

With the passing of years, I have learned that if I can hang on for just a little longer, these emotions---strong as they are---will pass and I can live again with the longing hidden deep inside my breast.

*Shirley Muller
TCF Lafayette, IN*

Hope

It is the gift of hope which reigns supreme in the attributes of The Compassionate Friends. Hope that all is not lost. Hope that life can still be worth living and meaningful. Hope that the pain of loss will become less acute And, above all else, the hope that we do not walk alone, that we are understood the gift of hope is the greatest gift that we can give to those who mourn.

- Rev. Simon Stephens, TCF Founder

To My Miscarried Baby

Out of our love you came.

Planned, wanted, welcomed.

Your announcement created excitement, joy.

Friends and family inquired,

Do you want a girl or boy?

Will you take Lamaze?

What colors for the nursery?

Then suddenly you're gone — and silence.

No one talks about a baby that won't be.

Were you real or a dream?

I feel alone and empty.

Where can I put my love that was for you?

Now what does it mean?

*Betty Ruder Reprinted from TCF,
North Shore Chapter Illinois*

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 who no longer march laughing on 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 of Halloween — a smile and a tear.

WINTERSUN by Sascha

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

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 world. 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

It's A Family Affair

When a child dies, grief is a family affair.

It hits Mom, Dad and siblings with equal despair.

Mom cries and cannot get out of bed. Dad holds in emotions and leaves much unsaid.

Sisters and brothers simply cannot understand

Why death came and dealt this kind of hand.

No one acts as they should, and nothing is the same.

The family wants to draw together but seems to share only pain.

Someone must be responsible when a child dies.

Each family member thinks in some way its them, and cries.

But no one is responsible for things we cannot control,

So reach out to each other and keep the family whole.

Don't let the difference in how you each grieve.

Change the love in your family or what you believe

Be strong when you can and weak when you must.

And love each other with kindness and trust.

Keep the family with love and you all will survive.

For we who have been there and made it through together,

Can say that holding on to each other makes love last forever.

from the McMinnville chapter of TCF

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 co-medic 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.

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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

Siblings 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 2nd. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: We associate masks with Halloween. As a bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling, do you continue to wear masks when you are with other people?

**** Please see page 8 about continuing to receive the newsletter.

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.

- ♥ Brenda Fields in memory of Jordan John Fields: "Love always, I miss you . Mom."
 - ♥ Chris & Denise Fallon in memory of our son Brian: " We miss you Brian so much. Love you, Mom & Dad."
 - ♥ Mary & Mike Hartnett in Memory of Michael: " Can't believe it has been 11 years without your smile and hugs. We miss you so much! Keep shining your light in Heaven! Love You, Mom, Dad, Katelyn, Dakota & Brooklyn"
 - ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of our son, Ryan (Ryfro): "Happy Birthday 10/26. We love you & miss you." In Memory of our sons Ryan (Ryfro), Tom Jr., Bryan (Bryfro) Soupis (considered a son to our family), Mark "Sparky" Abbott, Joe Coffey & Jim "Jimmy" Vick.
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Let Us Celebrate Their Births

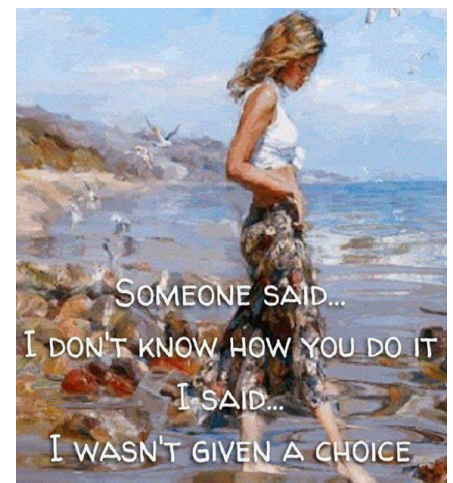
They are steadfast in their ways of honoring Michael, pushing through, carrying each other and me.

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 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 2025

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

***For those of you receiving
the newsletter by mail.***

***Last month, a post card was
included with your newsletter
asking you to let us know if
you would like to receive the
newsletter by email or continue
to receive it by mail. If you
returned the card, we will do
what you indicated. If you do
not contact us by October 12th,
this is the LAST newsletter you
will receive. You may return the
post card, call the chapter phone
(734) 778-0800) or email me at
brendabrummel@me.com.***