

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**September 2023**  
**Volume 35, Number 9**

**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:**

**September 7-** Monthly Chapter  
Meeting see page 7

**September 19- 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.

**September 23- 10 AM - Craft Meeting  
see page 8**

## Labor Day

The unofficial end of summer, it's the time by which we need to have new school clothes and supplies; the time to begin meeting new teachers and new friends; the time to what? For us bereaved parent to watch other parents standing with their eager little ones, waiting for that first school bus ride to the big school. To watch with tear filled eyes as the bus picks up their children for school, but no longer stops by our house.

Time to watch with anxious anticipation as the kids begin middle school, new experiences, new expectations, new fears. Time to learn that saying "I love you" must be done in private. Time to realize that with us, "I love you" will always be said in silence.

It's the time to watch our teenagers experience high school and its freedoms and decision. Time to wonder what temptations await our children, to wonder about that car they bought, to realize all these things are happening to some other parents.

It's the time to buy single bed linens for the college dorm; time to buy a new computer to take to school and keep the old one for us; time to listen to other parents talk about these events.

No, for us Labor Day is just that, a day to labor through the memories left

behind by the loss of our child, a day that truly signifies the end of the summer of our life.

*Sandra Wright*

## Reopening of School and No Child!

Summer ends, and across our nation, from the middle of August to the week after Labor Day, schools open for another year. For those parents surviving a child of school age, be that from nursery school to college or university, this can be as trying a time as the holidays. School buses travel again the busy highways of our cities and the quiet lanes of our countryside. Anxious parents stand with children about to make the first ride to school. Groups of youngsters play at countless stops across our land. America's most precious and costly activity is renewed. The children are off to school.

I remember well the silences of the September mornings of those first years. The bus no longer stopped at our home. I simply drove casually by; the people within never realizing it once carried the focus of my love, the repository of my dreams. The drone of its wheels marked anew the mind-numbing dullness of my fragmented senses as it moved its way down the tree lined lane once alive with my son's comings and

*(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 only to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

goings. It was always possible to avoid “back to school” sales. Seeing young people and their weary parents gather school supplies and clothing was just too much in those earliest years. Somehow, the perfect notebook, the brilliant sweater, the odd shaped erasers were simply unendurable.

The stream of vehicles heading for Cape Cod for that final Labor Day weekend, the last family outing to end the summer, was another scene to avoid. It was a ritual from which we seemed excluded. Could we still be a family without him?

Those years are gone now. Having returned to education, I now have “back to school” buying to do myself. I see the buses arrive to unload their treasured passengers, no longer feeling the emptiness of a bus that drives on, barren of hopes and dreams. But I do and will forever remember the pain of those unhappy years and sometimes I reflect on the many parents who now feel as I did. If you are such a parent, if you mourn a child who leaves a school desk somewhere unfilled, I promise that you are not alone in that pain. But even though you are not alone, you know that you are forever marked, that the death of your child or children has altered you in some basic manner. Perhaps time and much grief work remain before your spirit can yield up the agony and permit a new self to emerge. That time and work was necessary for me, as it is for all of us.

For me, grief resolution finally recalled me to my original work. I teach. I no longer administer or direct. The need for that fled before bereavement’s assault. I teach math, science, and social studies to sixth grade children, ages 11 to 12 over the course of a year. In wondrous ways they have restored love to my living. There is nothing of an intellectual character with enough value to equal that, so I have given them the love and caring that was mine, evoked by and for Olin. Thus do Olin’s gifts live on, called forth and given new life through the

innocent and selfless love of school children?

All who walk this road realize this is not substitution. Such is not possible. But it does reflect qualities of successful reinvestment, something each of us sorely needs. Today as schools prepare for another year, I look forward to a new group of children. But cautions arise within as well, the legacy of that time over 12 years ago, when the world came to a sudden halt, when the laughter of lifetimes ceased, when dreams evaporated with a morning mist. For those of us who dare live and love again, for those fortunate enough to have found a reinvestment encouraging the same, there is always risk. After all, tragedy can strike again. Our present or past pain grants no immunity. Students, the children within the school, invited me, albeit unknowingly, to take that risk again, although certainly not at the rich and deep level of father and son. Nevertheless, it feels right, and though I will never again know the depth of love which belonged to Olin and me, I welcome the chance to live once more on its margins. So schools, which were once just another manifestation of hurt, have helped me to restore purpose and balance to daily living.

There is surely such a reinvestment awaiting all of us, but we must seek the circumstances and create the opportunities for it to occur. I pray that all of us who have not yet had such good fortune may soon do so. All our children would want this for us as well. With that thought in mind, it is indeed worth striving for that dimension in life once more.

*Don Hackett  
TCF, Kingston, Massachusetts*

## Thank You Dear Friend

In a shaky voice I told you how much I had lost; and what I’d do to get it back no matter what it cost. You listened patiently to me as I spoke of my fear; and I know it broke your heart to see my falling tears. We speak of what once was and what could be; about yesterday and tomorrow and

the changes in me. I am a prisoner of uncertainty, my world upside down. The life I knew as my normal can no longer be found. But you took my trembling hands gently in your own; and you lovingly reassured me that I am not alone. The days ahead will be difficult, many times I will fall; but I know you will pick me up and help me through it all.

*Charles Jackson*

## My Grandchild Died

Many months ago now my grandchild died, some days it feels as if it were yesterday, other days it seems a life time ago. I am told by my friends and some of my family that it is time I “moved on”. They tell me that I must put “it” behind me!

It is not easy to smile back. It is not easy to tell them why I will never “get over it”. How can you explain the grief? One cannot do so and I hope they never learn from personal experience what it is like for a grandmother to lose a grandchild.

I used to think my heart had broken but I now know that is not true. If my heart had broken I would not be here. My “being” broke, I feel as if I am a 3D jigsaw puzzle that broke into thousands of pieces the day my grandchild died. Slowly, through self help I have put that puzzle together. It is not perfect and regularly a piece, or sometimes a few pieces, slip out and remain out for some time. They can be put back in and need to be for me to live my life, but I find I have two pieces that will not fit back into that puzzle, no matter how I try. Some days one piece almost fits; this is the grief for my grandchild. It will always be a new piece in my being. That grief will remain until the day I die. It is a piece of puzzle uniquely shaped from happy and sad memories, from an undying love, from so many emotions. I touch this piece of puzzle often, sometimes the grief it brings is so intense it is almost unbearable, other days it does not seem so bad.

Some days touching it makes me

smile. It is always in my thoughts and I feel it constantly, however I can place it in my pocket and know that it rests safely there. It is at peace so I have learnt not to struggle to try to make it fit.

The other piece is more difficult. It belongs to my child, the daughter I gave birth to, fed and nurtured, loved and cuddled. The daughter I watched grow from baby to adulthood. The daughter I helped shape into a wonderful human being. She too was part of my “being”, I understood her and we shared a history. We were mother and daughter. Now that piece has changed shape forever and does not even look like fitting in. Can I mold the shape to fit, no not yet. Will it ever fit back in? I do not know. I understand that she has changed forever and I love her unconditionally but I wonder if I will ever get to know this new daughter. Is it possible to find that comfortable place I once shared with her? Can that natural mother daughter relationship be learnt again now we are not child and adult? She has had to change to cope, she has been dealt the most terrible of tragedies, and her life has changed forever. She lost a child. She has needed to find strength from her deepest self. She is grown up now, she no longer needs me to nurture her as a mother but I still need her as a daughter. I long for the day when I can feel her arms around me again and hear her say I, love you Mum from her heart. Maybe then that piece of puzzle will have days when it fits into my pocket comfortably too.

It will always be a piece of my puzzle whose shape has changed but hopefully one which also becomes comfortable to hold. Is this why they say a grandparent suffers a double grief when their grandchild dies? Maybe.

*Author wishes to remain anonymous*

## The Lunch Box

I wonder how many people think about what it is like for a parent not to have to pack a lunch box for their child ever again. September marks

the re-entry of kids into the world of academics, but for some parents it's the reminder that the excitement of the children that electrifies the air won't be the same in their homes this year. So many hopes and dreams and memories are wrapped up in what occupies a major part of a child's life, school time.

Summer cushions us from having to be painfully aware that our children won't be walking to school or riding the school bus with the other kids or won't be trying out for the lead part in the school play or won't need new school clothes or won't fall in love with the girls he sits behind in math class. Parents who never had the pleasure of letting them go to school for the first time knows what they have missed. They remember their own first time; and would have liked to have relived it with their own child. They would have liked to have made it really special and to have asked all of the questions their own parents asked them when they arrived home from school. Hopes and dreams for this child's future will never be realized. I wonder if my neighbor remembers that if my baby had lived, this is the year that he would have started kindergarten. I wanted him to have a lunch box just like the other kids.

*Joan Jones TCF, British Columbia*

## That Anniversary

All our lives we've known about anniversaries. Our parents celebrated their Anniversary; the school we attended marked its Anniversary; the company honored your Anniversary when you started your career; the Lions Club held a gala to remember its Anniversary; but there is one Anniversary that we're never eager to recall, it's That Anniversary.

When a child dies, we retain vivid memories of that fateful day. Time cannot rob us of the memory and the grief of that awful and confusingly sad day. Unlike your wedding date or your first day on the job or when you graduated from school, which may have become hazy over time, the

circumstances and ticks of the clock of That Anniversary remain etched in our minds.

Some of us do special “things” on That Anniversary. We pray, we cry, we grieve, and some make an effort to try to distract the intense sadness that That Anniversary brings. Some walk on the beach or take a ride in the country. We look at old photos or other memorabilia to remember and to ward off anything that might cloud the memory of our daughters and sons. Friends and relatives also remember That Anniversary and may send a card or ask you out to lunch or choose not to visit you showing respect for your need for solitude.

Regardless of how you deal with That Anniversary, you cannot avoid it. Sometimes even the days leading up to That Anniversary bring apprehension and uneasiness. That's OK. That Anniversary will always come and go as will the days before and after, too. The Compassionate Friends understands that on That Anniversary, as when it occurred, your heart is heavy yet empty at the same time. It can be a confusing time. There may be guilt or remorse or simply confusion. But it is up to you to sort it out and move ahead because after That Anniversary there will be another and another. Surely your heart may not feel as heavy or as empty as time passes, but That Anniversary will always be there. How you face it, how you mark it, how you remember it and how you caress it is the key to moving forward and conditioning yourself for the next time That Anniversary occurs.

*Michael Tyler*

*TCF Lighthouse Chapter Lewes, DE*

## 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.

# SIBS

**Losing a sibling** can have a huge impact on your life. Siblings are often constants with you throughout childhood and into adulthood. While relationships between siblings can be complex and messy at times, that complexity makes grieving a sibling important. However, a parent's or a spouse's grief often take a front seat in everyone's mind, and you may feel left out or forgotten.

Unfortunately, sibling grief is not talked about as much as other forms of grief, but your grief for your sibling is just as important as grieving a parent, a spouse, or a child. There are a lot of things you might have to wrestle with when your sibling dies, but it's necessary to take time

to grieve, both on your own and with others.

Here are 5 things to keep in mind if you are grieving the death of a sibling.

## 1. Remember the Good Times

When someone you love dies, especially if the death is unexpected or if the person is close to your age, thoughts about what might have happened in the future can be overwhelming. While it's important to grieve those lost moments, you don't want to lose sight of the time you did have with your sibling.

Taking time to reminisce about good memories can help you treasure your sibling's [life](#) and memory. Plus, focusing on the good times will prevent you from solely dwelling on time lost. Another way you can keep your sibling's memory alive is by visiting a place that was special to you

and your sibling or doing one of their favorite things, like watching their favorite movie, playing their favorite board game, or listening to one of their favorite songs. Doing those favorite things can be especially helpful on significant dates, like your sibling's birthday, the day of their death, or holidays, and they can even become rituals you use to honor your sibling's memory.

## 2. Come to Terms with Unfinished Business

Barbara Karnes, a registered nurse and end-of-life educator, points out that when we grieve, "*it is the unfinished business, the unsaid words that we carry heavily within us.*" If you were unprepared for your sibling's death, you may feel a lot of emotional turmoil during your grief journey. You might struggle with things you wish you had said or done, or perhaps you made plans with your sibling that now won't come to pass. In these situations, it's natural to struggle to reconcile yourself to the loss you've suffered.

Talking to a grief counselor may help you process your emotion. Additionally, writing a letter to your sibling can help. While they won't see your letter, you can say the things you wish you had said to them, and you can also be honest about your feelings.

## 3. Initiate Interactions with Your Other Siblings

If you have other brothers and sisters, your one sibling's death might affect your relationships with them. Your other siblings are likely struggling to understand and process their grief, just like you. While it might be difficult, gathering together can help all of you in your grief journeys, and it might be up to you to initiate these gatherings.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a nationally renowned and respected grief expert, says that each family member mourns

(continued on page 7)

### 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](http://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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

**Ann Arbor:** Mike Fedel: [MikeFedela2@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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  
Siblings 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, September 7 at 7:00 pm. As usual, there will be a First Time Table and tables for “older” members. For the latter, the topic: What are some things that you have done on the anniversary of your child’s death? Have others understood what you did; have others shared that day with you?

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**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.

- ♥ Judy Cappelli in memory of my son, Christopher: “I still miss the sound of your voice and your infectious laugh. It’s been 9 years and I miss you as much today as I did the day that you left. Love you Christopher forever & always, Mom
  - ♥ Denise & Chris Falzon in memory of our son, Brian, “Even though you aren’t here now Bryan your birthday is still a celebration of your life. We miss you so much! Love you my “Forever Young” Son. Mom & Dad”
- 

## 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.*

Mark Burnstein, whose beloved son, **Alex**, born 1/30; died 4/10; 30 years

Jennifer Cook, whose beloved daughter, **Loren**, born 5/30; died 12/15; 36 years

Susan Johnson, whose beloved granddaughter, **Ava Smith**, born 10/12; died 7/13; 16 years

Mona, whose beloved son, **Marc**, born 9/12; died 6/18; 45 years

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## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

the loss of a sibling in saying, “*While you might have anticipated some of your sibling’s responses (for example, your emotional sister has probably been emotional), other responses may have surprised you.*” Try not to let these differences alarm you or hurt your feelings.” By talking to your siblings, supporting them, and spending time with them, you show that you acknowledge their grief and struggles.

Spending time with your siblings isn’t just about helping them heal—it can help you heal, too, by reminding you that you aren’t alone in your grief. After all, your siblings know your family history, so they can remind you of moments with your sibling you’ve forgotten and provide unique understanding you might not find anywhere else. or everyone’s grief journey.

### 4. Take Time for Yourself

When your sibling dies, it might be

easy to distract yourself by helping your parents, living siblings, or other family members, but it’s essential to take time for yourself. It can be tempting to bottle up your feelings, and at first, you might feel guilty about needing to spend some time apart from your friends and family. However, taking time for yourself is an essential part of the grief journey. Time spent by yourself gives you space to process and acknowledge the emotions you are feeling.

There are many ways you can take time for yourself. You can focus on “me time” and simply relax by taking a nap, reading a book, or going for a walk. If you’re feeling more active, you could spend time outdoors or do something creative, like journaling, painting, or gardening. Some people like to make scrapbooks or memory

boxes honoring loved ones who have died.

### 5. Get Support

When someone you love dies, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed and lost as you try to navigate your grief. Joining a support group or visiting a therapist can help you process your feelings and show you that you are not alone. Getting support is especially important if you are a twin whose brother or sister has died or if you find yourself without support from your family. While seeking outside support might seem scary at first, it can also be extremely beneficial.

Every family is different, and grieving any loved one is never easy. While the journey ahead will be difficult, as you work through your emotions and grieve with your family, you will find a way to move forward and treasure your sibling’s life and legacy.

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

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

Craft Day



We will be making origami photo albums at our craft day on Saturday September 23rd at the home of Kathy Rambo from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Supplies will be provided. There will be a sign up sheet and examples at the September meeting. Any questions please contact Kathy Rambo (734-306-3930) you can text, call or e-mail her at Katjrambo@gmail.com.  
Cost: \$3.00