

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



February 2025
Volume 37, Number 2

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:

February 6th -7:00 pm - Meeting
see page 7

Tuesday, February 18th 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.

Saturday, March 15 at 1:00 pm
Bowling Fundraiser - see this page
and page 7
No Craft until further notice.



The Compassionate Friends

16th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 15th, 2025 at 1:00 pm
(Registration will begin at 12:30 pm sharp)

Vision Lanes
38250 Ford Rd
Westland, MI 48185
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

Please let us know if you will be joining us so we can reserve lanes
Joyce Gradinscak @ 734-560-6883
Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410

\$25 per person

(Includes: 2 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza & pop)
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes

Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)
Mail to: Mary Hartnett 5704 Drexel St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

OPEN TO PUBLIC

The Holiday of Love

Valentine's Day is a day of remembering our loved ones with small gifts and great feelings. When your child was living, did you often remember him/her on Valentine's Day with a card or a balloon, perhaps a gift of candy or something special that was wanted? So, why stop that tradition?

Remember your child with love on this special day; a single rose left at a grave; a special holiday balloon to float around the house, reminding you each time you look; a special photo in a nice frame to sit on the mantle. These are ideas in an article from an old *Bereavement Magazine*.

It seems like a pretty good idea, too! 1

(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



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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

What a better way to celebrate the Holiday of Love than by enjoying fond memories of your child. Try making his/her favorite dinner and treating the family. Use special photos scattered around the table to talk about some fun facts about him/her. It's important to show the others in the family how much they are also loved so don't forget some small Valentine's gifts for them too!

Just because our hearts are broken, we don't need to ignore "The Holiday of Love".

*Art Rogers,
Hinsdale IL Chapter of BP/USA*

Precious Valentine Memories

The lace has grown yellow with age. The edges are tattered and the glue that held the pieces together has long dried up, leaving only a slight stain on the faded red paper. It is much smaller than I remembered. Perhaps time has caused it to shrink. It seems so fragile, resting here in my palm. The words have nearly faded and even the heavy crayon marks have lost their luster over the years. There's a smudge of unknown origin on the back, near where the paper was rubbed dangerously thin by the uncounted erasure marks. The name is barely legible, the pencil lines so weak that only the mind can read the letters. I found it the other day, while doing one of those winter chores: cleaning closets. It's nearly 25 degrees below zero outside and it seemed like a good idea to clear away some of the trappings of a thousand years.

February is a middle-of-winter month and most of us have fewer choices in this month than in any other. For those of us here in the Great North, it is either shovel the walk or clean the closets, and it's warmer in the closet (although not by much!) So, armed with a dust rag, trash bag and the radio, I opened the door and slipped in...not really sure about what I might find. I thought I was just going to clean the closet.

But, that first box sent me spin-

ning. I found things I hadn't even remembered I'd lost! I finally found the holiday gift bought for my sister last year and then so carefully been hid away. I found snow boots and sand pails, a beach towel, three old paperbacks, a pile of magazines (all saved because I wanted to clip some- thing "important").

I found shoelaces for shoes no longer "alive" and several other things that had once been alive. I found a half a chocolate-covered cherry and part of a deck of cards. It was quite a treasure box, filled with junk that once had had some meaning to someone, maybe even me.

I sorted through the coats and clothes, painfully aware that "some-day" would probably not arrive in my lifetime. The too short hemline and the too-small waist would not be mine again. I packed those things away, mindless of the hours and the drifting snow outside the windows.

When I found the box of scrapbooks, I sat down, now that the closet had some actual floor space. I touched the bindings, not quite sure I possessed the courage required to open the pages. The phone rang and forced me away from that decision. I left the closet and did not return until now.

That's when I found the old paper Valentine, tucked away between the pages of a life lived long ago. As I held that once sticky, but now only stained, piece of construction paper, I felt a connection with other valentines, in other lifetimes. I heard a whisper of another voice: my own mother's exclamation over my offered gift. It blended with my voice, speaking across the generations of children bringing home paper messages of love. OH! I had forgotten THAT - it had become lost in the pain of losing you.

It was a peaceful hour in that closet, listening to the sounds of my life, lived long ago and now remembered through the pages of the scrapbooks. I found my own laughter and that of my friend, joining the laughter of my own children, seeking the laughter of tomorrow's bearers of paper hearts.

Time does pass on. Generations of hearts have been delivered and received. Generations of love have been shared just as generations of hurt have been endured. It felt timeless in the closet ...as if when I opened the door, the giver of this Valentine would still be waiting! Perhaps that is exactly what is happening, perhaps the engineers of all of our hurts and happiness are still waiting - waiting for us to claim that love and bring their light back into being. There were so many years when I could not bear this exchanging of paper hearts! There were so many years when I counted FIRST what was missing, never realizing that in the measuring of my losses, I was truly losing what I did have.

The snow had drifted deep across the yard: only the tips of my flamingos' knit-capped, covered heads are visible in the white. But my vision has been cleared somewhat this afternoon by a visit in the closet where I found a memory that no length of time could fade. The lace is faded, the edges tattered, but the heart always remembers and through the tears, the sounds of love given and received echo back to me.

So now, this little paper message from both my past and my future sit on my dresser, reminding me each morning to make room for the happy memories as well as the hard ones.

I had "lost" that Valentine form so long ago, but the bearer of that most precious gift of love has NOT been lost to me. Our loved ones die, but the love we share between us can NEVER BE DESTROYED. Love continues past all change and becomes the memory trace that guides the human spirit. Love isn't enough, but without it, the world grows cold and frozen, and the sidewalks never get shoveled and the closets never get cleaned, and the memories get lost in the confusion of pain not healing.

Go find a Valentine, clean a closet, rummage through a drawer, search for some tangible evidence that, indeed, your love DID LIVE - and what a sweet treat that will be!

Darcle Sims

A Moving Experience

We are sorting through and packing up for a move. It's worse than your usual move from one home of 10 years to another; the house we live in now is the last one we shared with our son, Aaron. We are sorting through and packing up memories, along with the tools, dishes, and books.

I have heard other bereaved parents talk about moving after their child died. For some, it was too painful to stay in a house that held so many images. They spoke of not being able to get away from the sorrow, of running into the pain every time they walked through the door. We never felt that way about our home. This was a place Aaron loved, and we have been very happy here—the last earthly house that Aaron knew.

I know that we will be happy in our new home as well— but that house won't hold a breath of him, as this one does. Now, I can walk out onto the patio and still see him in my mind's eye, drifting across the pool on a raft. I can easily imagine him coming out of his bedroom door, calling "Mom . . ." as he so often did. The new house won't have any history with Aaron, and so there is a feeling of loss in leaving this old place.

I know that Aaron goes where I go; he is a part of me always and forever. Nonetheless, I will miss walking familiar streets where once he walked. I will miss the feeling of connection as I lie on the side of the hill at the park and watch the clouds drift by. I will miss the scent of his closet and the view from his window. There are stories in these rooms and this neighborhood, stories woven from the fabric of my son's life. I may carry the stories with me, but I am leaving behind the props.

We have packed up his baby book, the special school projects, and the box of cards we received when he died. Hannah still has his treasured rocks in her room, and the boxes of comic books so carefully preserved and alphabetized are ready for trans-

port. Paul is going through the collections of action figures and baseball cards to determine what can be sold or given away, and I expect that his raggedy old "bud" from infancy, No-Way Noah will take up residence somewhere in the new house.

But how do you pack up his passion for life? I know what to do about things I can hold in my hands; what I want to know is – how am I to carry his heart?

I've had a vision of these rooms, empty of all our things: I am doing one last walk through, taking one last look, saying one final goodbye. It is a scene that brings with it a gentle sorrow, and though I know we are moving forward and that all is well, in my heart there is a sense that I am somehow leaving Aaron behind. It makes me think back to those first months when I could not leave the house, even overnight. I told Paul, I know this sounds crazy, but I feel that if I leave I might come home and find a note on the door that says: "Hi, Mom! Sorry I missed you. Catch you later. Love, Aaron."

Six years later, I am not anxious about leaving home; I don't worry that I might miss a visit. The shock and disbelief of early grief has passed away and the reality of Aaron's death has settled on my soul. Though I know that I will never again see my son walk through the door, I also know that I know—I will never leave Aaron behind. He goes where I go. Still, I will be leaving a piece of my heart in the old house. Should you visit, listen for the gentle beat. You might sense its rhythm somewhere about—gazing out a tree-shaded window, lingering over a bloom in the garden, or drifting gently across the sky. And you will know that a house holds more than the stuff of memories. A house can hold a heart.
Frankie Wilford TCF Carrollton-Farmers Branch, TX In Memory of my son, Aaron

The Greatest Grief

A sudden accident killed your child. That terrible phone call changed your life with no warning—you didn't get to say goodbye—this has to be the

most terrible loss of all.

Your child died by suicide—you feel you should have been able to prevent it. Your guilt is devastating. How can you live with such an incomprehensible tragedy?

You only had one child—now you have none and your focus in life is gone. What's the point of living? What could be more devastating?

You've experienced the deaths of more than one of your children—will it happen again? How does one survive this pain again?

When your baby died, your dreams died—you have few memories and you're too young to be suffering like this— this loss is the most unfair.

Someone murdered your child—an unbelievable violation—you're angry and more your frustration with the legal system feeds your anger. This must be the very worst.

You're a single parent—your child has died and you have no one to lean on, no one to share your grief—surely your suffering is the most painful.

The unbelievable has happened—your adult child died—you had invested so much in that child—now who's going to care for you in your old age?

You had to watch your child suffer bravely through a long illness—you were helpless to ease his pain and to prevent his death—how do you erase those horrible images?—Yours must be the greatest grief.

The truth is that the death of any child is the greatest loss, regardless of the cause, regardless of the age. Our own experience is far more painful that we had ever previously envisioned, so how could we possibly comprehend what others have undergone? To make comparisons between our own suffering and the pain of others is an exercise in futility. It accomplishes nothing and sometimes can be hurtful to others. To say that one type of death produces a greater or deeper grief than another tends to place different values on the children who have died. Each child is worthy of 100%

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control my crying.

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet for grieving.

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean

you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.

You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to continue to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

It's been a year. I no longer want to be with people. Their conversations are so trivial and shallow. Can you believe my friend thought the end of the world had come when her boyfriend dumped her? The real disaster is that my brother is dead! Why am I so intolerant?

Many people believe the second year of grief is more difficult than the first year. You feel less numb and more vulnerable to feelings of sadness and helplessness. You have begun to confront painful feelings and memories you worked hard to avoid during the first year when you were coping with the reality of the loss.

I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

This is truly one of the, most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.



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, February 6th. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: Have you done something special for your child on Valentine's Day? What are some ways to include them in this "Holiday of Love?"

Please note the information about our annual Bowling Fund Raiser. As a part of that, we are asking if anyone would like to donate a basket for the basket raffle, we would greatly appreciate it. Please bring to meeting in February or March or call Mary or Joyce and they will arrange to pick it up. Some ideas for baskets: Lottery Ticket, Craft Basket (adult one or kid one), Foodie Basket, Movie Night Basket, St. Paddy's Day, Game Basket, Wine basket to name a few.

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

♥ Glenn and Carol Mead in memory of **Bobby Mead**; "In loving memory of our son Bobby. Been 10 years of missing you.... but always forever in our hearts and thoughts. Let your star shine brightly on 2/18."

Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, DJ, Addison & Heidi

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

In Memory of: **Tom Jr.**; "Happy Birthday on 2/16. We love you & miss you."

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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.

Tony & Julie Accettura, whose beloved son, **Brandon**, born 10/11; died 11/27; 29 years

of our grief, each person's sorrow is 100%, and each loss is 100%, because we love each child, those still living and those who have died, with 100% of our being. I can't imagine wanting to walk in the shoes of any bereaved parent, can you?

*Peggy Gibson
TCF, Nashville, TN*

Some Quiet Valentines

While watching an evening sunset
Fade in the western skies,
We know that when tomorrow dawns,
From the east the sun will rise.

Although it may be hidden
By veils hanging low,
We're sure it will appear again
And we'll feel its warming glow.

And so it is with life,
When seen through misty eyes,
When our world is suddenly dimmed
And we plead and ask those whys.

It is then we learn, 'no man is an island,'
As someone wisely said,
As we travel life's uncharted course
And by an unknown hand seem led.

To walk that path of sorrow,
Enduring life's great loss,
But by chance or fate that someone's
Path we are guided to cross.

That someone through kindness
In his or her way does impart,
A warmth and a tenderness
That so lifts a sad heart.

For it's the depth of their smile
That lifts this sorrow of mine,
And by far they are best suited
To be our Valentine.

We may be someone's Valentine
And never be aware,
In these caring, still-grieving hearts,
Our children's love is there.



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

February 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

Someone Asked Me...

Someone asked me about you today. It's been so long since anyone has done that. It felt so good to talk about you, to share my memories of you, to simply say your name out loud.

She asked me if I minded talking about what happened to you or would it be too painful to speak of it.

I told her I think of it every day and speaking about it helps me to release the tormented thoughts whirling around in my head. She said she never realized the pain would last this long.

She apologized for not asking sooner. I told her, "Thanks for asking." I don't know if it was curiosity or concern that made her ask.

But told her, "Please do it again sometime – soon".

Barbara Taylor Hudson