

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



April 2018
Volume 30, Number 4

The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

Chapter Leader

Sally Cassidy
Joyce Gradinscak
Catherine Walker
734-778-0800

Newsletter Editor

Brenda Brummel
10531 Calumet Trail
Gaylord, MI 49735
231-585-7058
bbwriter59@aol.com

Treasurer

Rhonda Temple
25164 Hanover St.
Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

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:

NEXT MEETING - April 5 -- First time
tables, sibling table, topic table: Do you
do something or have you thought of
something to do to honor your child?

April 14 - Craft Day - see page 8

April 17 - 6:30 pm TCF Dinner-at
Brann's Steakhouse (39715 6 Mile,
Northville, MI) sign up at meeting or
call Kathy 734-306-3930 or katjrambo@
gmail.com.

Easter

Easter Sunday morning, early,
we gather at the river.
I hear the ancient words of hope, the
Hallelujahs of celebration,
the thanks for Son-Rising.
Can I be forgiven
if I only think of one son
who's only rising is in my heart?
I make my solitary way to the waters
edge,
I throw my Palm Cross into the river
and watch it drift away;
much more slowly than he did all those
years ago.
Dear one, you still blaze across my
sight like the sun-rise on Easter morn-
ing;
filling me with gratitude that you
still rise with every blessed memory of
you.
Arleen Simmonds/TCF Kamloops, B.C.
In loving memory of our son, Kenneth
Simmonds
Who drowned in the Thompson River,
August 11, 1988

Spring Waiting

Winter's end is almost here.
Crocus struggle in the snow.
Sunlight has a softer glow.
Is the winter long this year?
Spring waits, watching for a cue...
Not to rush your grief away.
But to be there, when you say.
Spring is waiting, friend, for you.

Find a little time for Spring,
Even if your days are troubled.
Let a little sunshine in
Let your memories be doubled.
Take a little time to see
All the things your child was seeing –
And your tears will help your heart
Find a better time for being.
Sascha Wagner

The Piano Sits Silent

I etch her name in the dust.
Run my hands over the keyboard,
too long untouched
by the pianist;
The one no longer
physically here,
who played the songs,
badly at times,
yet unstoppable in
her need to make music.
As if it was her mission
to get it right.
As if she knew there was little time
to master the melody.
So she played and played.
Melancholy tunes
that spoke of lives gone too soon.
I would call to her,
"You're playing too loud,
I can't hear myself think."
If I could just take back those words,
for I long to hear my
beloved child play the music,

(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 only given to those who subscribe to the newsletter.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

(continued on page 7)

that once rang through these halls.
Those uneven strains would be
the sweetest music to my ears.
I touch the ivories and hear
the foreign sound of this long
silent instrument.
And remember my precious child,
remember the joy
her efforts brought her...
Remembering, remembering....
Though my tears fall gently,
my heart smiles as I
recall the sweet sounds of her life.
And even as the piano sits silent,
My memories resound
and I recall the love, always the love.
Cathy Seehuetter
TCF, St. Paul, MN

Mind Games

Mind Games—it can happen anywhere, anytime.
Driving along the highway, I think: just suppose I turn my head quickly, will you suddenly be sitting next to me? Will you be humming along to a song that was a particular favorite of yours? I swear I can hear you. I want so much to hear you singing loudly and a bit off-key again.
Or perhaps I'm in the supermarket and I see someone with long, blond hair—is it you? My heart thumps. I want so badly for it to be you. People glance at me strangely and I realize I'm standing in the middle of the aisle weeping. Even the special foods you loved can reduce me to tears. I'm tempted to buy your favorites and prepare them for when you come home for supper.
At night when I climb into bed, I scrunch over toward the middle, this gives you room to sit next to me the way you would after coming home from a late date.
My senses are alive with you. I can smell your special per-fume and feel your long, slender fingers with the pearl ring Daddy gave you for graduation. I can hear your laughter. I will you to stay with me until I fall asleep.
Then there are the times when I consciously call out your name in the silence of the house. My mind knows

there will be no response, but in my heart I hear you answer me and for that split moment you are there at the top of the stairs as surely as I am at the bottom. Barbara...Barbara...Barbara... Your name is a litany.
I suppose that behavior could be considered quite strange. What does one make of it? Weeping in supermarkets, calling to one who is not there. Oh, but in that fraction of a second when one feels one's loved one close, that feeling, although bittersweet, soothes and comforts a splintered heart.
Mind games...it can happen anywhere, anytime.
Bunny Placco

Why We Should Talk About Our Children Who Have Passed

It was dark, cold day in October. At least that's how it felt from my son's dimly lit hospital room. In my mind, I imagine it raining outside, the fog lining the windows and obscuring our view of college dorm rooms, sidewalks, the arboretum across the street. I don't remember many of the details of the day. I just remember holding my son's hand, weeping as I set by his hospital crib, watching the clock, praying and hoping for answers, and sitting with his doctors as we discussed the end of Charlie's life... His lungs were tired, and he was ready to go.
I've laid awake replaying those conversations, and replaying what happened only hours after, when a hand knocked loudly on our door in the parents' sleep room, and a nurse's voice told me to come quickly. I ran to his side only in time to be sat down in a rubbery hospital recliner and have my son disconnected from his oxygen support and placed in my arms. His heart gave out. He was done, and my wish was to hold him when it was time.
Before the death of my son, I didn't want to think about death. I didn't want to talk about it. As a mom, talking to other parents who had a child

that died made me nervous, as if I could "catch" the bug, and something tragic would happen to my child.
I am not that person anymore. I have changed, and I have seen things from shoes that I never wanted to be in. No one wants to be in the shoes of the parent whose child died.
Standing on this side, I cannot think of anything more important than to talk about them. To say their name. "*Charlie.*"
To talk about his favorite things. To talk about his personality. To smile and laugh and remember and never let his memory die. To talk about the impact he left, and how the echo of his life is still resounding in the hearts and lives he touched.
His legacy is just beginning, and if I have anything to do with it, it will only grow from here.
There is something so important—so healing for myself and other parents who have lost children to be able to share that child's story.
To be able to laugh at funny memories. To be able to mourn with another. To be able to celebrate and remember and value a little life that has gone too soon.
A few months ago, I met another mother, much older than myself. Her son was born still years ago. I asked her his name, and found out days later that it was the first time in 35 years that anyone had asked her that question.
This is not okay. We need to talk about these children. We need to brave the pain and talk about them for the sake of the parents and for the sake of that child's memory.
This is not the natural order. It isn't at all. Parents should not have to live on as their children die. Parents should not plan funerals or buy tiny urns or headstones for their child. Parents should not. Of all the things parents whose children have died should not do, talking about that child is not one of them.
For those who have no option, but to walk through the pain, I want to

give you freedom today. Freedom to talk. Freedom to share. Freedom to laugh and cry and remember and mourn and love that child openly, even in death. You have freedom to say their name, even if you never had a chance to say it to them while there was breath in their lungs.

Say their name. Tell their story. Cry. Laugh. Celebrate. Hope.

Let's move past the stigma. Though in the past it may have been taboo to talk about a child who died, let's move on. Let's move on for the children, who deserve to be remembered. And let's move on for the parents, who deserve a chance to tell their story.

For those who can be a friend and a listening ear. Please do today. Mention that child's name. Send a note and let that parent know you are remembering. Sit down for coffee and relive special memories with them. We are all in this together. Brave the pain together. Remember together. Celebrate together.

Lexi Behrmdt

To Honor You

To honor you, I get up everyday and take a breath.

And start another day without you in it.

To honor you, I laugh and love with those who knew your smile And the way your eyes twinkled with mischief and secret knowledge.

To honor you, I take the time to appreciate everyone I love,

I know now there is no guarantee of days or hours spent in their presence.

To honor you, I listen to music you would have liked,

And sing at the top of my lungs, with the windows rolled down.

To honor you, I take chances, say what I feel, hold nothing back, Risk making a fool of myself, dance every dance.

You were my light, my heart, my gift of love, from the very highest source.

So everyday, I vow to make a difference, share a smile, live, laugh and love.

Now I live for us both, so all I do, I do to honor you.

Connie F. Kiefer Byrd

*(In Memory of Jordan Alexander Kiefer
(8/24/88 – 12/13/05))*

Feed the Cat?

My son is dead—and you expect me to feed the cat? Isn't it amazing how society is so rigid in their expectations? There are rules you know...steps we must all take..."Whoever set these standards obviously has never lost a child, the core of your heart and soul. It just doesn't work that way. Simple every day tasks are impossible to complete. The only constant in your upside down world is pain, unlike any pain you have ever known. Shortly after your child's death, you are expected to return to your job, take care of your household, pay the bills, and yes, feed the cat! It has been a year for me, since I lost my son, and I still go blank mid act. I stand in a store with no idea what I came in for, or I cry over bananas because Lee loved them. I can go from laughter to tears in 1.1 seconds.

The Compassionate Friends has been a life saver (or perhaps a heart saver) for me. Only those who have experienced the same heartache will understand when you say I need to be alone, but I can't stand to be alone! Each grieving parent must heal in his or her own way, in his or her own time. One step forward, 15 back, spin around and start over, only to repeat the same progress, one step forward, 15 back, spin around... You get the picture. But you don't have to heal alone. You need not walk alone. Join us, we know you're not crazy—just a grieving parent. We do care.

Ann

TCF, Roseburg, OR

The Jigsaw Puzzle

Every Christmas my husband Roy is gifted with several new jigsaw puzzles. He has an annual competition with his sister in law to see who will be the first to complete the identical puzzles they receive from her daughter, who seems to de-

light in the complexity of the puzzles she chooses.

This year's puzzle took a long time to put together. Some large areas were very grey and muted, tone on tone with some splashes of brighter colors. For some reason the coloration of this picture got me thinking of our son Kenneth. He has now been absent from us for more years than he was with us. Kenneth left us at almost twenty-four years and this October we will gather together to give thanks for the gift of his life for the fifty-second time.

Sometimes when I think of Kenneth it all seems so long ago that I wonder if I dreamt him. Like the puzzle, the past seems kind of grey, tone on tone, fuzzy. Other times there are memories that flash before me, brilliant in color and clarity.

This is like remembering my own life. When I put all the little pieces together it really is like a jigsaw puzzle or a mosaic. There is light, dark, monotone and brilliance. Altogether it makes a picture that has taken a lifetime to put together. Sometimes like jigsaw puzzles some pieces get lost, dropped and hunted for; the picture isn't complete until all the pieces are found.

When I look at all the puzzling pieces of my life and try to fit them together I realize that although I didn't choose this particular puzzle it was mine to put together. If I had missed or lost those pieces that were Kenneth my puzzle would be incomplete and the picture not so beautiful without those splashes of brilliance that were him.

Arleen Simmonds

TCF Kamloops, B.C.

"Thank you to all the special parents, family and friends who attended our "10th Annual Bowling fundraiser".

Also a big "Thank you" to Westland Bowl for hosting this wonderful event." 5

SIBS

Sisters and Brothers: from Michelle in Australia

There is a lake inside me, made of tears and sadness and grief. When my brother died, that lake rose out of nowhere and drowned me completely, for a very long time. The water covered me. I saw, heard and felt the world through its distortions. I moved slowly, held down by the weight of it. Huge waves would suddenly seize me and dash me against the shore leaving me dazed and exhausted. Sometimes the lake overflowed completely, obliterating everything around it, covering all its surroundings in my tears, in my sadness. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't see or find a way out, and I was too weighed down to try. I drowned. For a

long time.

As time passed, the water became stiller and clearer. I was dashed against the shore less often. The overflows became rivers, then streams. I began to make out the odd shape in the distance. I was still drowning but I felt like I was learning to swim a little bit, having some control over how I drowned.

One day, to my surprise, I realized my eyes were above the water and I could see some way into the distance. My surprise turned to grief that what I used to be able to see, was no longer there. A huge wave crashed down and I drowned once more.

Gradually, I became more used to the view, even though I still missed what I used to see. My head stayed above water for longer. Sometimes an arm stretched out to feel the air. Often

currents pulled me under. Sometimes waves knocked me down. And I drowned for a little while again. But I remembered how to swim and how to pull myself upright.

These days, seven years later, most of the time I am standing, with only my feet in the lake. The lake is still there, but somehow the weight of it round my ankles makes me stand stronger. And all those years learning to swim and stand upright again taught me that I might not stand in the same place, or in the same way, but that I am still able to stand. There are still storms, and rain, and the odd hurricane.

And every now and then, a tidal wave that still has the power to knock me down, knock the wind out of me and make me fight for breath. Make me lost in the currents and the waves for a while, make me retreat to the bottom of the lake. But I am no longer drowning. I am standing.

I wish my brother were standing with me, but then I would most likely be standing in a different place, have learnt to swim a different stroke. And I know that my brother is pleased to see me standing; he helped me learn to swim again, and he held me upright when I found standing hard, when it exhausted me, when I would have gladly sunk back into the lake. I know he's happy that he can see me above the water, so his view of me is clear. So I'm standing.

I know some of you are drowning right now, and some of you are just trying to learn to swim. I know it feels like the lake is endless and the water will never let you go. And some days you wish you could just give up and be swallowed completely. But if I can swim, if I can stand, you will too.

They say if you fight the current too hard, you will drown from exhaustion, and the best thing to do is float until the water brings you back to somewhere calmer, or to shore. If you get exhausted trying to swim, trying to stand - float for a while till you get your breath back, and you'll find your swimming legs again later.

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

Joe Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919

Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632

Dana and Brandy Bumstead - Loss of an infant -(313) 447-8144

Kathy Rambo - Sudden Death - (734) 306-3930

Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.

TCF CHAT ROOM

www.compassionatefriends.org

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

National Mailing Address: PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; Phone: (630) 990-0010; Toll Free: (877)969-1101; 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

Pinckney TCF Chapter: The Christian House of Prayer, 9949 McGregor Road, Pinckney, MI; 2nd Monday of the month, 6 - 8 pm; Jimmy Batchelor - 734-277-9705

Tecumseh TCF Chapter: First Presbyterian Church, 211 W. Chicago, Tecumseh, 4th Sunday of the month, 2-4 pm, Rose Hatchett, 517-270-3308.



And one day, you'll find yourself standing. You will, I promise. And when you're above the lake, give your loved one a smile, because they will have been waiting patiently for a clear view.

SIBBS Winter Issue 2001

Prayer for Spring

Like Springtime, let me unfold and grow fresh and new from this cocoon of grief that has been spun around me.

Help me face the harsh reality of sunshine and renewed life as my bones still creak from the winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me.

As I recover from the insult of life's continuance,

I readjust my focus to include recovery and growth as a possibility in my future.

Give me strength to break out of the cocoon of my grief,

But may I never forget it as

the place where I grew my wings;

Becoming a new person

because of my loss.

Janice Heil Coquitlam

BC Canada

Springtime Thoughts Lead to Children Who Have Died

After an unusually, stormy, cold winter all over the nation, spring has finally arrived. The days are getting longer, the weather is getting warmer, and the flowers are now blooming. Along with nature's beauty comes thoughts of our children who are no longer with us. Oh, how they, too, would love the beautiful sunsets, seeing the return of the birds from the south and perhaps experience a new crop or newly born animals coming out of their winter shelters.

But they will not see any of this, and it makes me very sad to think not only what we parents have lost but also of what they, our children, have lost. It was only after my daughter died that I came to appreciate the little things in life, stop-ping for a moment to listen to two birds talking to each other, watching airplanes leave streaks across the clear blue sky; and seeing Marcy's favorite flower blooming, the lily, knowing that I will leave those flowers on her grave the next time I visit the cemetery.

Many, many things I have come to realize are not very important when

you compare them to losing a child: the daily baseball scores, the fact that gasoline has gone up another penny, the most recent Hollywood couple to divorce.

We don't always have good days; the sense of loss and emptiness is greatly intensified on these beautiful days and has emotional triggers for the bereaved – graduations, Mother's Day, summer vacation and trees blooming once again.

The coming of spring does not make everything okay again. What it does do is offer hope: hope that the pain of losing your child will ease a little with each passing year, hope that your grief work will help you in the healing process, and hope that you will be able to move forward into a new life full of promise.

Spring reminds us that regardless of what has happened in our lives, nature's process continues as we must also. Be kind and patient with yourself. Don't expect too much, too soon, but try to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your body, and notice the smile that will form both on your face and in your heart.

Sandy Fox

Let Us Celebrate Their Births (continued)

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.

Ken & Karen Godlewski whose beloved son; **Peter Morris**, Born 11/18; Died 1/3; 41 years

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 on back page.

♥ Frank & Lois Sinagra "In memory of Scott. Happy Birthday, Scott. We'll love and miss you always."

♥ Ken & Karen Godlewski "In memory of Peter Morris"

♥ Vince & Sylvia Fregonara "Michael V. Fregonara, three years missed. There are no goodbyes for us. Wherever you are, you will always be in our heart. Forever loved, Mom, Dad & Bradbury"

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

April 2018

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: Rhonda Temple, 25164 Hanover St., Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

April Craft Day

Our April Craft Day will be meeting at the Plymouth MI Library, 223 S Main St., Plymouth, MI. 48170 Parking is behind the library off S. Union St.

The date is Saturday, April 14th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. We will be making tiles using photos of our children (you bring) or other photos/sayings (we supply). Examples will be at the April meeting where you may sign up, or let Kathy (734-306-3930) or Gail (734-734-2514) know so we have enough supplies. Supplies are provided. Cost: \$3.00 each.