

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



August 2018
Volume 30, Number 8

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:

NEXT MEETING - August 2 -- First
time tables, sibling table, topic table:
How have the years changed your grief
journey?

August 18 - Craft Day - see page 8

August 21 - 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

September 6th- Special meeting with
Alan Pedersen - see page 6

September 16th-TCF Picnic

Apple Trees and Memories

I stand beneath a sky of blue, the August sun warming my back. Apple perfume is in the air, and my grandchildren can't resist plucking the golden globes from my backyard tree. It's one of those "firsts" that children of three and five eagerly share with us older folks. We're learning anew that the best apples don't come from a supermarket.

Apple juice drips to the grass beneath bare feet. Giggles float skyward. I close my eyes, lost in the memory of my mother transporting me and six siblings down a country lane to the local orchard where we eagerly fill baskets, then collect five cents for each bushel of handpicked apples. At the end of the day, we're rewarded with ice cream cones all around.

Even at that young age, before I knew that life isn't all apple pie and ice cream, I was learning about change. The orchard ritual meant summer was shutting down, autumn was just around the corner, the school bell would ring, and life would change—whether I liked it or not.

I can't say that growing up with this knowledge of change prepared me for that September day when my son died. His death can never be anything less than an unacceptable tragedy. Rather, I learned that the unexpected can and does happen. And when something truly

terrible happens, we shut down like the end of summer vacation. I fear there will be no more apples and ice cream for as long as I live. There is no fun in being present for any more "firsts."

Fall has always been my favorite season. Now the calendar is cluttered with remembrance dates. I resist the forward movement from the days when he lived to the days after death, as life goes on, but he does not. My life has forever changed. My feelings about life and death have changed. I have changed.

With each leaf that falls to the ground, I feel a loss so deep that finally, I am empty like the barren trees. When he

(Continued on page 4)



The Compassionate Friends of Livonia
Would like to welcome you to the
'2nd Annual'
Family and Friends Picnic of Hope & Healing
Sunday, September 16th
12p - 5p
@ Rotary Park - in Livonia
(off 6 mile between Meriman and Farmington)
\$10 per family
please bring your favorite dish to pass
(meat is being donated)
Any questions please contact Rhonda Temple @ 313 477 9889
(alcohol not permitted)



The Compassionate Friends
Livonia Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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 people who subscribe to the newsletter.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

died, I expected the empty feelings to last for the rest of my life. I had forgotten my childhood lesson.

Seasons change. While I grieved, I watched six years' worth of seasons come and go. For me, there is no closure. I'm not prepared to say good-bye to the past. But slowly, I've begun to allow change to happen. If there's anything I can suggest to those who are the "less seasoned" in grieving, it is to remain open to the present. Be awake and aware as grief changes the way you feel and who you are. Seasons change, and the seasons of the heart can change. As I peer into the future, I no longer see only emptiness. Sometimes, I smile at memories of seasons past. Sometimes, I see blue skies and apple trees.

Carol Clum

Carol and her husband, Alan, began attending TCF meetings with the Medford, Oregon, Chapter following the death of their 19-year-old-son, Jason, in September 1995 by suicide. In 1998, they organized the first local TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting event. In 2001, she also became a bereaved grandmother when her son's little girl, Hannah, was stillborn. She has two surviving children and two grandchildren, and also volunteers locally with WinterSpring, Center for Living with Loss and Grief. Carol also was TCF Southern Oregon Chapter co-leader.

Eight Years Later: My Five Stages Of Grief

The Swiss psychiatrist, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, wrote in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*, about the various stages of grief that the bereaved know all too well. I'm sure many of us have heard this from our shrinks or bereavement groups. As I reflect back on the eight years since my 17-year-old daughter Casey's suicide, my journey tracks remarkably closely to Kübler-Ross' own writing and working with the terminally ill.

It all started one weekend in January, 2008. My wife Erika and I had a big fight with Casey over her mouthiness, rudeness and defiance. Parents fight with their teens, right? At one point Casey locked herself in my home of-

fice crying and yelling at me.

"I'm going to go live on the streets and you'll never see me again!" she screamed.

"Good!" I yelled back out of sheer frustration. I left her behind in a puddle of tears. Drama queen, I thought.

Later that night I passed Casey sitting on the living room sofa, watching TV, pounding away on her laptop. We just glared at each other.

And that's the last time I saw her.

I awoke the next morning to a note on her desk: The car is parked at the Golden Gate Bridge. I'm sorry.

At about dawn that morning, she took our car, drove to the Golden Gate Bridge and jumped. She was never found. The life we once knew, all of our hopes and dreams for the future were gone, a firestorm, earthquake, catastrophic power failure. When the police officer gave us the news from the Bridge Patrol I wanted to go to sleep that day and never wake up.

Every loss is tragic, but suicide sits apart from other types of loss. Even the language around suicide is different. One "commits" suicide as if it were a crime. The suicide victim and survivors left behind are cloaked in shame, scorn and stigma. I couldn't imagine outliving my daughter for even one minute. In my wildest dreams I never thought I'd be here eight years later. Instead I stumbled through Kübler-Ross' stages of grief, just barely.

First came denial. In the days, weeks and months following Casey's suicide, Erika and I were in a fog. They hadn't recovered her body so maybe this was a hoax, a prank to scare us. Maybe the girl on the Bridge Patrol video wasn't her. We couldn't look at it. Now I wish we had but it's too late. Maybe she was holed up somewhere, in hiding with a friend. But her friends swore up and down they knew nothing; we believed them. I had a dream of her walking in through our front door, dirty from the streets, with her friends Roxanne, Maryse and Max in tow. But she didn't.

Next came anger. I was a rage-aholic, angry at God, the universe and everyone around me who had their kids and could find nothing more than empty platitudes: we're sorry for your loss, you're in our thoughts and prayers, she's in a better place. I wasn't pleasant to be around, and lost friends, neighbors, parishioners and co-workers. Family relations were strained. Sometimes grief isn't very pretty, and the bereaved are not very loveable when they are in their lowest, darkest moment.

Bargaining and depression came hand in hand with anger, although I never fully understood Kübler-Ross' stage of bargaining. I lost my job in the 2009 financial meltdown, and found some relief that I didn't have to drag myself into work anymore. I was a useless zombie anyway and didn't much care about work, money, status or stuff. Our Casey was everything to us. So I sat at home trying to drink myself to death – vodka. I felt undeserving of any kind of happiness.

By that time a year had passed since Casey's suicide, and many clueless but well meaning people urged me to get over it and move on, that familiar and infuriating platitude for the bereaved.

You don't get over this; rather, you adapt to a new normal. And what would I have moved on to anyway? I had to cling to my grief because to let go would be disloyal to my Casey. My grief was all I had left of her.

Fast forward seven years and I am now in the stage Kübler-Ross calls acceptance but I prefer resignation. I'm past denial, anger and vodka. I let go of the army of therapists and antidepressants. I'm resigned to a life no one would want, but am making the best of it. Erika and I downsized and moved to a smaller home in the Bay Area. We joined the fight for a suicide barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge, and let go of people we thought were friends in favor of others with bigger hearts. I speak and work in the Marin County school districts, and published a book (Scribner). *The Girl Behind The Door* 4

is my search for answers to Casey's suicide. It won two literary awards.

When I'm asked today, "How are you?" I can't bring myself to say good or better ... not yet.

Each year that passes means my Casey drifts further and further away. She becomes a distant memory I can only connect with through photos and videos. But every year is also slightly

less unbearable. I'm getting control of my anger, not reacting to every slight or insensitive remark as a rallying cry to war. I'm working on rediscovering some sense of purpose. And that's a huge step in the right direction considering where we began this awful journey.

John Brooks, author of "The Girl Behind the Door"

Be Patient

My child has died.

A light in my life has been snuffed out!

A piece of me is gone forever!

It is said that the depth of love signifies the depth of grief.

This must be true for my love is deeper than I can say.

My grief is so intense that sometimes moment to moment is unbearable.

Be patient

Today I may smile and laugh;

But tomorrow I may be cranky.

I am hurting and I am confused.

Sometimes I am angry that I am in this nightmare.

Other times I feel totally and completely at peace

Because I sense my child is free and no longer suffers.

Be patient

I know I must move on with my life.

I must because others need me and I need them.

The road to recovery is difficult because it has peaks and valleys.

I know my child would want me to move on as well.

I am afraid. Will I forget my child's gentle voice?

Will I forget the tender touch?

No! I will take all the beautiful memories for I was blessed to have this child.

Be patient

I am told and read that grieving parents learn from their child's death and teach others.

What am I to learn? Who am I to teach?

If I am to teach, it should be positive.

Whatever can I learn and teach from this journey that is positive?

With your compassion and support I can make it.

Along the way I will try very hard to learn the positive messages to teach others.

More than anything I want my child,

My family and friends to be proud of me.

Be patient

I may cry; I may laugh; I may be angry; I may be at peace.

At any given time today and today's tomorrow

But tomorrow's tomorrows will bring happiness.

I am trying to seek happiness now, but I am tired and fragile.

I see other bereaved parents who have gone before me.

They have made it down this long hard road.

I will as well.

Be patient...

~Susan

TCF/Winnipeg, Canada

Dedicated to bereaved parents who have travelled this difficult road ahead of us.

Written in loving memory of all our children

Roller Coaster

Grieving is such a roller coaster ride. One day we think the worst is over, that we're really beginning to pick up our lives again. The next day—or hour—it's as though it was all fresh, and we have made no progress at all. We need to remember that recovery from grief is not a smooth, uphill path. There will be many setbacks, many side paths onto which we are led, before we can continue our journey out of the valley of sadness. We're doing as well as we can and these setbacks are part of the progress. Accept them when they come. Take a deep breath and continue on.

From Healing After Loss—

Martha Whitmore Hickman

Between Now and Then

There are moments which mark your life. Moments when you realize nothing will ever be the same and time is divided into two parts, before this, and after this. John Hobbes (Fallen)

We all know this moment in our lives, that line that designates before and after. It seems like an eternity ago, it seems like moment ago, one breath away. It is now the pivotal moment in my life, where I measure the then and now.

My grief has not been transformed into some meaningful nugget of wisdom, but I have learned much wisdom, as I have learned to integrate grief into my life. These bits of wisdom were passed from others who has walked with grief longer. Early on, I asked someone how I would get through the years ahead, acknowledging my son's birthday, the holidays, the ordinary days. She said I would get through them by taking baby steps, focusing on the day, the moment, the breath in front of me. I and my family have traveled these past seven years by taking baby steps.

Some say that time heals and that grief changes, but I have found that instead, it is my response to grief that has changed. My arms still ache to give him a hug, my heart yearns for

his physical presence, and grief can still knock me to my knees, but now, I get up faster, as my grief carrying “muscles” are stronger. I am able to predict what moments are going to be challenging and find space and time to be with that grief filled moment. The days when I feel capable of accomplishing tasks while grieving, outnumber the days, when I just want to stay curled up on the couch. I can plant the tomatoes, weed the garden and can those tomatoes in the fall, while still grieving.

As I become more familiar with grief, I am also more aware of the resiliency that lies within me and from that resiliency, I feel strength to live with my life as it is. Perhaps the aspect of this that surprises me most is that I do feel joy. Joy is felt when I experience a beautiful sunset, a formation of spectacular clouds, time with my daughters, or when I discover a penny or other connections to my son. As time passes, and as I find balance in carrying my grief, I am also learning that joy and sorrow sit side by side and there is room in my heart for both. We grieve deeply, we love deeper still.

As you take your own baby steps, becoming familiar with grief in your life, you too will discover the resiliency that lies within. Someday, you will find room in your heart for both your sorrow and your joy. As Mitch states in his poem, “you will learn to weave together unraveled threads on the loom of a falling star.”

Kim Bodeau,

My Perennial Love

Every summer my son gives me flowers. He planted them 17 years ago ... the summer before he died. I remember the day he planted them. Not the exact date, but standing there talking to him as he poked holes in the ground and carefully placed each one. I remember thanking him and thinking how very sweet of him to do that for me.

Terry died the following February. After months of crying and grieving, summer came and with it his flowers bloomed! Of course it made me miss him even more, but how I loved seeing them and knowing that he had put them there the year before. I know nothing about flowers so I was astounded when my mother told me that what he had planted was an annual and not a perennial and that they should not have come back.

A few weeks ago, our neighbor who moved in last summer, commented on my impatiens. She said she was surprised to see them come back from last year. I told her that they have been coming back every year now for 16 years.

Just saying it aloud made me realize how extraordinary that really is! There is something else I have come to realize. My love for my son did not end when he died. My love for him is indefinite; it is enduring. It is perennial.

Maureen Harman

TCF Tidewater Chapter, VA

Buttons Available

If you would like a button made with your child’s picture, contact Laura Myers (lm Myers@twmi.rr.com).



Alan Pedersen to Perform

For our September meeting, we will have special guest, Alan Pedersen, performing.

Alan Pedersen is an award-winning speaker, songwriter and recording artist. His inspirational message of hope and his music have resonated deeply with those facing a loss or adversity in their lives and have made him one of the most popular and in-demand presenters in the world on finding hope after loss. Since the death of his 18-year-old daughter Ashley in 2001, Alan has composed music about his loss.

Alan’s tour is called, “Angels Across the USA”. His tour will be visiting over 300 cities in 2018. He travels the country in his special van that commemorates loved ones and speaks to groups through faith-based organizations, hospices, local Chapters of The Compassionate Friends, and many other types of organizations who minister to bereaved families. He offers CDs of his music as well as butterflies that can be placed on his van.

Alan also successfully served four years as the Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends.

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.

- ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens “Always in our hearts Justin. Love, Mom & Matt”
- ♥ Susan Wobig “In memory of Michael Ryan. We love you & miss you. Always in our hearts, Love Mom & Nick”
- ♥ Valerie Weatherly “In memory of my daughter Kelli T. Weatherly. Kelli was our gift from God & we miss & love her so very much”

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.

Dori D. Harris whose beloved son; **Allen**, Born 2/4; Died 10/15, 29 years

Jennifer Lingertot whose beloved daughter; **Madison VanHaren**, Born 4/6; Died 12/11, 24 years

SIBS

More On Surviving Siblings

I gained a greater understanding of how powerful guilt can be for surviving siblings observing my son Michel after the death of his sister, Kristen.

As parents, it is our role to support, nurture, and protect. This is not the role of siblings, yet it gets twisted into their grief as well. As a result, it is common for brothers and sisters to feel that they failed in some way.

Siblings may often believe there must have been something they could have done to prevent the death. And sadly, it is not uncommon for siblings to believe they caused the death by wishing ill thoughts on their sister or brother during a disagreement or fight. This can have unfortunate repercussions if the sibling dies. Well-intentioned

people may add to the confusion by making statements like, "You need to be strong for your parents." adding an unnecessary burden for the child to now care for us. Michel also heard, "God must have needed Krissie." causing him to fear that God may want him too.

Survival guilt is also common. Not only do parents believe they shouldn't outlive their children, but brothers and sisters often feel guilty for being alive and enjoying life. They may believe as well that they need to be the perfect child to make up for the loss. This is a real complication of grief. As parents, we need to be aware of this and reassure them that they don't need to make up for anything, nor can they. We might want to tell them that the greatest gift they can give us is to be their own person and live life to the fullest.

When death lands on the doorstep of our surviving children at a tender age it most likely becomes their threshold into adulthood for understanding death can demand adult-sized answers. I definitely noticed this with my son who was only nine when his sister died suddenly. He became a quieter, more serious boy. The innocence of his childhood was left behind when he realized his sister, his buddy, was gone forever.

Watching our surviving children come to terms with death of this magnitude, I've always felt, is the double-edged sword of the bereaved parent. We are wrestling with our own grief and the endless questions with answers that don't come easily, making us, once again, feel as helpless as we did when our child died. Being open and honest with our children and their struggle and keeping the channels of communication open, can actually bring us closer to them. We can heal together.

Carol Kearns
Copyright 2014

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Grief

I had my own notion of grief.

I thought it was a sad time

That followed the death of someone you love

And you had to push through it

To get to the other side.

But I'm learning there is no other side.

There is no pushing through

But rather,

There is absorption.

Adjustment.

Acceptance.

And grief is not something that you complete,

But rather you 'endure'.

Grief is not a 'task' to finish

And move on,

But an element of yourself--

An alteration of your being

A new way of seeing.

A new definition of self.

Author Unknown

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 Thursday7-9; 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.



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

August 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

August Craft Day

Craft day will be at the Plymouth Library, 223 S Main St., Plymouth MI. on Sat., Aug. 18th, from 10 am to 1 pm.

We will be putting our child's picture on a t-shirt with iron-on printable fabric. You provide the shirt, any color is okay.

If you want us to print the iron on sheet, please have your photo to Gail by August 14th. If you want to print your sheet at home, they will be available at the August meeting.

There will be a sign-up sheet (to make sure we have enough supplies) and examples to view at the meeting. Call Kathy (734 -306-3930) or Gail (734-734-2514) for any questions. Cost is \$10.00 each.