

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



February 2022
Volume 34, 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 3 - Monthly Chapter
Meeting - see info on page 7

February 15- 6:00 pm. TCFDinner 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.

February 26 - CRAFT meeting - see pg 8

Valentine's Day

When someone we love dies, days on the calendar take on a new meaning. Days that once were full of joyful anticipation can now be a cause for dread and fear. Knowing that we can no longer celebrate special days without our loved ones has changed every holiday and other special days. Some of these days like Christmas, Thanksgiving or birthdays are clearly going to be triggers, and the anticipation of them allows us and others to prepare a bit for them. Other holidays may take us by surprise. Maybe they were not significant when our loved ones were alive so we don't initially associate the holiday

to the pain of missing them that we are now feeling.

Valentine's Day can be one of these days. The pain of the holiday is clear to those who have lost a spouse. Most often thought of as a romantic holiday for spouses and couples, this holiday can be very painful for people missing others as well. We begin celebrating Valentine's Day as children when we struggle to put our names to our classmate's valentines. The day is filled with heart shaped candy, class parties and homemade valentines for our parents. It is a day to celebrate love, and as a society we have embraced the day to celebrate the love we feel for our parents, children, spouses, grandparents, siblings, and other family and friends. The day can bring up the pangs of grief because someone we love is now missing from this celebration.

With the death of our loved one, some control has been stripped from our lives. What we thought would be forever is suddenly taken from us. Just the same as we do not have control over the days that come along every year, we wish there was a way for them to just disappear-- to have "special" days that cause pain, to just forever be taken from the calendar.

Unfortunately, time moves forward without our permission and these days will come every year. We are left to

Save the Date!

May 14 - 1:00 pm
Bowling Fundraiser
Vision Lanes
38250 Ford Rd, Westland



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*

decide how to make them bearable. This will be different for each day, but Valentine's Day invites us to remember the love. We can decide to focus on the memories. We can decide to focus on the love. The goal is not to take away the pain or to make everything okay, rather to allow us to share the love that always and will forever be there. Some things that you can do on Valentine's Day to share that love:

- Light a candle in honor of your loved one.
- Bring Valentine's Day cards to people who may not get any.
- Write a love letter to them and read it aloud and share it with the universe.
- Make a donation in their name to a homeless shelter or donate a book in their name to library.
- Plant a tree or a plant in their memory and place a memorial plaque beside it.
- Post their picture on Facebook and ask others to share their memories or photos with you.
- Go shopping for a Valentine's card, and look for the perfect one---the one that they would have purchased for you and buy it as a gift for you from them.
- Go to a favorite place and spend time with your memories.
- Make their favorite meal and invite others to come share in love and memories.

These are just a few ideas. Open your mind and your heart. Do what feels right to you. Try one thing, if it does not work for you then try something else. Valentine's Day is different, but it is still Valentine's Day. Our loved ones are forever a part of us. They have changed us forever and their love lives on in us. This Valentine's Day, allow space for the joy of their memories and the power of their love to share space with the pain of them not being with you.

Glen Lord (The Grief Toolbox)

Spirit Gifts

Grief is such an individual journey. We are cast on its path without our

consent, enveloped by a depth of pain we never dreamed existed. We all have times when despair and loneliness threaten to engulf us.

But we do have one companion on this lonely, unsought road: our child who died. I think there is never a moment in the day when a part of me is not connected to Philip, to our years together-and to our present relationship. Our journey through grief is a good-bye to the physical presence of our children, but it is never good-bye to their spirits and to the essence of their beings. Philip lives inside me now, and the same gifts he gave me when he was physically alive are still available to me through his spirit. In some ways, those "spirit gifts" are stronger, because they are contained and undiluted within me.

When the days get unbearably hard, when I think of all this wonderful young man missed by not getting to live out his life, I try to remember to focus on the present Philip, the one inside me. I try to integrate his gifts into my life, sometimes seeing through his eyes, thinking from his heart and mind. Often when I walk in the hills, I'll hear his voice: "Pay attention, Mom." (He noticed the details in nature so much more than I.)

No matter how old your child who died, the essence of this unique being remains within you forever. It is through us and others who knew them that our children continue to live and affect our present world. Though not in the way we hoped and expected, our beloved children are still alive .

. . . May the spirit of the child who lives so deep within your heart help you through this month and through every moment of the re-establishing of your life.

*Catharine (Kitty) Reeve
TCF Marin and San Francisco Chapters,
In Memory of my son, Philip*

Faded Memories

I remember the first time I realized that my sense of my son, Jeremy, was beginning to fade.

I was losing his smell, the exact color of his hair, the tone of his voice when he said, "Oh, Mom," the feel of his arms around me when I got a too-seldom sixteen year-old hug.

Until my son's death, it had never occurred to me that I knew him through all of my senses. I believe the profound sense of loss I've experienced results in part from this total cut-off from his being. It's not just that I can't physically see him, but the essence of who he was is gone.

Perhaps that explains why I would often go to his room when I wanted to recapture a connection with him. Some nights I would sleep in his bed. I would wear his tee shirts. I would make a cocoon of an afghan that wrapped around him many times. Somehow, I felt his energy about me. I smelled his smell.

At other times, I'd get out the Ziplock bag; the one with snippets of his hair that was cut when they had to screw the "halo" in his head to secure his neck and severed spinal cord. I'd study the color of his hair, memorizing the shades of light brown.

And the sounds? Only one. I found a cassette tape that he had recorded himself accompanying a favorite band. I listened to that for hours, eyes closed, trying to capture the vision of those moments. Although my behaviors might seem odd to some, the fear of fading memories eased.

Tom Robbins, in his book *Jitterbug Perfume*, says "Death is impatient and thoughtless. It barges into your room when you are right in the middle of something. It doesn't even bother to wipe its boots." True. I was in the middle of parenting my only child. Death not only left the dirty mess of grieving for me to clean-up, but I had no warning.

Had I had warning that a three-quarter ton pick-up truck was going to run head-on into my son's Toyota Celica, I would have long before bought a camcorder and taken hours of audio and video. Lights. Camera. Action. The opening scene is me yelling, "Can you quiet down a little? You're sound-

ing great, but those drums are going to drive the neighbors crazy.” No answer.

Next scene. In his room, head-set on, eyes closed, tongue showing, intensity high, drumsticks alive with action.

Next scene: At the soccer field. I’m feeling the pride of watching my half-back move the ball down the field, demonstrating his years of experience.

Next scene: Middle of the night. I wake up to go to the bathroom; pass by his room. I see the light from the computer screen. “Jeremy, you’ve got to go to school in the morning. Turn that thing off.” Fade out. Regrets. I didn’t have a camcorder.

Often, just when I’m struggling with trying to remember the details, the minute details, I’ll have one of those experiences.

It’s something that I’m hesitant to tell anyone about, partly because it feels so private and partly because I fear I won’t be understood. I’ll be sleeping, and he’ll come to me. Instantaneously my senses take in his presence; all of who he is. I feel the weight of his body against me as we hug. I see his eye-brows that almost, but not quite, meet. I smell that smell that is his alone. I hear his voice, oh so familiar. I find myself surprised that he is so real.

I used to awaken disappointed that it was “only” a dream. Today, nine years after his death, I treasure these infrequent experiences. While I don’t understand it, and I have no explanations, each time it happens I believe I have spent a brief time in the presence of my son.

I thank God I don’t have to rely only on faded memories.

Judi Simmons Estes Prairie Village, KS
In Memory of my son Jeremy

Love’s Lasting Touch

Don’t weep for me when I’m gone,
Because I’ll always be there.
My spirit will exist in all the earth,
In the water, trees, and air.
You’ll hear me say, “I love you”,
In the whisper of a breeze.
You’ll know that I’m beside you,
With the rustling of the leaves.

You’ll feel my arms caress you,
In the warmth of each sunrise.
The moon will be my goodnight kiss,
The stars my watchful eyes.
Your life will be my legacy,
Your memories my epitaph.
These ties will bind us together,
Till we meet on heaven’s path.
I’ll not ever desert you,
We’ll never be far apart.
I’ll live within you always,
Nestled deep inside your heart.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny

Wounded Heart

“Your broken heart requires at least as much care as a broken bone. With proper care you can be confident that you will heal. The same powerful forces that mend a broken bone will heal your emotional pain, but a wounded heart needs time and proper care to heal.”

~Harold Bloomfield, MD~

If someone fell and broke a leg, people would rush to their aid. They wouldn’t stop to even think about it. Yet, when it’s our hearts that are broken, few rush to our aid and even fewer understand. At first, we receive the cards and phone calls wishing us well and telling us “if there’s anything I can do”...but they soon taper off to a trickle. Then we begin to hear that we must ‘get on with our life,’ ‘we can’t let it get us down,’ and we’re told just how soon we should be ‘back to normal’... we’re given a deadline of sorts. When we don’t follow the acceptable standards for healing, we are thought to ‘need help’...the professional kind... and we’re told that we are ‘in denial’. These same people, who seem to have all of the answers, not only have never experienced the loss of a child but also tend to not want to get too involved... too close to our pain. They would rather stand off to the side until we’re back to our old selves...whatever that is! They’re uncomfortable when we speak of why our hearts are broken and they don’t mention it for fear of reminding us of how our hearts broke in the first place... as if we could ever forget.

When they ask us, “How are you”... it’s more a greeting than a question. They don’t want to hear how we ache inside, how lonely and empty we feel, how desolate we feel. Why...because they can’t fix it. They can’t make us whole again. And unlike a broken bone that’s healed, we will never be as good as new. We will forever be missing a part of what made us the person that we once were. When our child died, so did a part of our heart and where that piece was, now there is nothing...only a gaping hole that nothing and no one can ever fill. Unlike a broken bone, we will not mend in a few weeks...in fact, we will never fully mend. We learn to live without that piece of our hearts...to live with our loss, to survive...one day at a time!

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux
In Loving Memory of My Angels...
Michelle, Jerry & Danny

A Valentine’s Day Wish

How I wish I could bring our children back to us for Valentine’s Day—24 hours we could spend telling our children of our love.

But, alas, we are doomed to spend another Valentine’s Day without our beloved children. Others who have not lost a child, tend to take for granted these special days. A card that says “I love you, Mom and Dad” should be carefully folded and saved in a special place. All too many parents consider these cards to be renewable commodities. There’s no need to save this one—“we’ll always get another one next year.”

For many of us, next year came and there was no card. Tears of sadness replaced tears of joy on this special day. But for many of us the memories remain of those Valentine’s Days gone by. Because our child’s love remains with us, our child will never truly be gone.

This year on Valentine’s Day, let us shed tears of joy that we were given even a short time with our child—for this, no matter how short, can never be taken from us.

Wayne Loder

Days in the Valley

An early morning phone call brought news that irreversibly changed my life. My parents called to tell me my younger brother had been killed in a car accident. They wept as I spoke to them. I had never heard my Dad cry before. Numbly, I hung up the phone. I didn't cry. There was not time for tears. Flight plans had to be made, clothes packed. I had to think clearly and act quickly.

The 100-mile trip to the airport seemed especially long and dark as I drove alone that morning. Later, aboard the plane, I looked out the window and tried to comprehend what

had happened. Maybe it wasn't him, I thought. Maybe they got him mixed up with someone else. I dreaded the scene that waited me at home, yet I couldn't get there quickly enough. I longed to comfort Mom and Dad, to be with them.

Arriving in Des Moines, I was met by relatives. At last I could let myself cry. When I reached my parents' home I was relieved to finally grieve with them, but a terrible pain was burrowing deep within as the reality of what happened began to sink in. Funeral arrangements were made. People gave their condolences. Stacks of cards arrived daily. The pain remained. I sensed God's presence as friends and family gathered. Words meant nothing, but those who came and cried with us were the ones who have comfort. They

didn't quote Bible verses. They didn't try to explain why it happened. They just hugged us and cried.

For almost a year, I replayed again and again those events as if they had been stored on videotape. Every sight, every sound, every pain was as vivid as if it had happened the day before. Time has numbed the pain and faded the "tapes" to some degree, but my life will never be the same. There will always be a hole in our family that cannot be filled.

I see life differently now. I've learned things that have made me more mature. Tragic loss demands finding something meaningful in it or retreating into bitterness. When I said good-bye to my brother, I never dreamed it would be the last time I would see him. Words left unsaid echoed in my mind for many months. Now, taking time to say and do the things I used to put off is more important. Treating each opportunity to be with friends or loved ones as if it might be the last time I will see them give me the incentive to resolve conflicts and say the things that need to be said. Problems and disagreements are never insurmountable.

Experts say the grieving process should end with the acceptance of death. Instead of accepting my brother's death, however, I have only acknowledged it. Death, like an unwanted visitor, doesn't have to be catered to, but it does have to be acknowledged for the healing to begin. I can't say I understand why my brother was killed, but God has given me strength to go on. Though at times it appeared that there was no way out of the valley, time has brought me renewed strength. Time does not heal all wounds, but it does bandage those it cannot heal.

Rick Bunkofsky

TCF, North Central Iowa Chapter

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

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: 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 Thursday7-9; 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

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, February 3rd at 7:00. First time tables; topic tables ***“Do you ever dream about your child or have other ways in which your memories don’t become faded?”***

From your leadership: Our February Chapter meeting will be held inside the church, unless we hear different due to covid concerns. Please check our Livonia Facebook page for any updates.

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.

Kim Heath, whose beloved son, ***Daniel***, Born 9/27; Died 9/22; 33 years

Debbie Petersen, whose beloved son, ***Daniel***, Born 9/06; Died 4/22; 30 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.

♥ Karen Grittner in memory of Shawn; “Thanks for years of caring.”

♥ Tom and Connie McCann, “Happy Birthday, Tom Jr. 2/16. We love you and miss you.”

♥ Tom and 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.

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Thank you to our Chapter Leadership – Our group would like to thank our leaders, Joyce Gradinscak, Mary Hartnett and Cindy Stevens for all their work keeping our Livonia Chapter going through some rough times lately, Covid-19 and how it has affected all of us. Also, to their husbands who help with setting up the tables and chairs for our meeting. Thank you also goes to our facilitators, greeters and those that make our coffee and bring snacks to our group in memory of your beautiful child, grandchild or brother or sister. Thanks to Kathy Rambo who keeps our Craft Day Group and the TCF Dinner Group together by providing us with her expertise in crafting and making reservations for our dinner. Thanks go to Brenda Brummel, our newsletter editor, and to Judy Cappelli, who mails out our newsletters every month. Thanks also goes to our Steering Committee who help make decisions for our Livonia TCF Chapter. Thank you!

We Need Not Walk Alone, We are the Compassionate Friends



In the next few months, we will be redoing the list that is read at the Annual Candle Lighting in Kellogg Park. This last year, we had over 1000 names, as we have not updated the list in several years. Starting next month, we will put in a form and a process to have your name(s) included for the December 2022 Candle Lighting Event.

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

February 2022

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



February Craft

We will be making origami photo albums at our craft day on Saturday February 26th 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 February chapter 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