

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



January, 2019
Volume 31, Number 1

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

NEXT MEETING- January 3 - First
time tables, sibling table, Infant loss table,
topic table: Reflect on the holidays - what
worked and what didn't work in relation to
your grief.

January 26 - 10 a.m. - Craft Day
Plymouth Library- see page 8

January 15 - 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

I Awoke New Year's Day

I awoke New Year's Day with the first thought of realizing and dreading that in just one month and three days, Todd would be dead for two years. How could that be possible? A part of me still insists that I can peek into his room and see his tousled head above the rumpled covers, sleeping off the late New Year's Eve bash, waking to watch the ball games while I make our traditional New Year's Good Luck Dinner. Of course, it wasn't that way last year and this year did not bring a change. I did manage to make a New Year's dinner this year, though, but I elected to take in a movie in lieu of hearing the ball games. Enough is enough! It starts with Halloween, through Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and then the anniversary of his death. The countdown is nearing, and ends for another year. God help me! That's a plea, a prayer, a hope. New Year's resolutions? I hear my friends resolving to lose weight, stop smoking, be better organized. My problems aren't that specific. I'll make my resolutions one day at a time, to survive that day the best way I can. Hoping that when nightfall comes, I will have felt that extra bit of strength to make it through the times when pain cuts through like a knife. I've come far this past year, we talk about him with ease now. His name does not bring the

choking rage of tears, as memories have become precious; most of the time I carry the pain well; when it begins to stalk me now, like an animal with its prey, I search frantically in my memory banks for the sound of his laughter and the warmth of his love. It always seems to be very near, hovering over me like a protective coating, and I whisper, "Son, I love you, please know that I love you." And he knows. All there ever was, and all there ever will be, love. It has more dimensions now than before his death. It reaches farther than an earthly plane, and it encompasses a broader horizon. But it all began with the gift of my first born, Todd. And the true understanding of its strength came with the death of my firstborn, Todd. He gave me love, he gave me all. I wish all of my friends each day of the New Year a sense of peace, contentment, and a new found happiness, the courage to rebuild your shattered lives, and the belief that it is possible knowing love is forever, separation is never totally complete.

Brenda Holland
TCF, Piedmont Chapter Concord, NC

Reflections on a New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to live without the physical presence of the one we have

(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

<i>Child</i>	<i>Parent, Grandparent, Sibling</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Age</i>
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Names available only to members

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.

John Boughton whose beloved son; **Robert**, Born 2/13; Died 5/19, 33 years

Sally Heil whose beloved son; **Robert (Bobby)**, Born 4/6; Died 9/27, 40 years

Lois Rodgers whose beloved daughter, **Kristin**, Born 8/12, Died 10/02, 51 years

Matt and Shera Siewicki whose beloved son, **Devin** Born 6/30, Died 10/27, 22 years

lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out "Wait, I'm not ready yet!" The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today; and it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into which we are to become. Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion towards others is more profound. Trivial things are not longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We're living the same life, just differently. Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child's life has had upon the world continues through us. So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child had become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond? The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect, nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life "on hold." Rather, they are a part of life itself. Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is not a better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call "ME", a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child's presence in the life we chose to live.

*Paula S Schultz
TCF Evergreen Park, IL*

Suicide Hurts Everyone

Sitting in my living room reading your August Newsletter made me realize how important my monthly newsletter means to me.

You ask if anyone wants to receive it via the internet? I would like you to know how important it is to us to receive your newsletter each month and hold it in our hands. If it were on our P.C. it would be a reminder of our son and now our daughter cannot be held in our hands anymore.

Holding the newsletter and putting it down and picking it up again to reread how many others are in the same boat helps us to continue on. Do we grieve less...NO! Do we miss them less...NO! But, it does let us let us go on even though at times we doubt we can.

The August Newsletter helped us relive the Apple tree Memories because we too did the same thing every fall. Only the apple trees were in our backyard. They had fun in the tree house in one tree. They had fun whipping the fallen apples against the tree's trunk and shouting out 'score!' when it splattered against the tree! They had fun bringing the good ones in to make applesauce, pies or canning. For a brief time they were alive in our home because of the Newsletter we held in our hands and for that I am eternally grateful. Holding it is tangible!

Our son took his life 10 years ago and our daughter 3 years ago. Just as people were accepting our son's suicide our daughter did the same. She never got over her brothers passing, "SUICIDE HURTS EVERYONE!" Now we have to endure the looks of those who refuse to understand that suicide is an illness. They keep their distance like it could be contagious. Yes. "SUICIDE HURTS EVERYONE!" Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, friends, teachers, co-workers, children and parents. If only those that see that's the only way out of their struggles could somehow be aware how us left behind suffer endlessly at their passing thus acknowledging how important it is for them to remain

among us because, "SUICIDE HURTS EVERYONE!"

Everyone should try to contribute to Compassionate Friends to help keep the Newsletters in our hands ,it's important to help us who are unable to make it to your all important meetings That help keep our sanity because "SUICIDE HURTS EVERYONE!"

*Elizabeth Mulatti
TCF, Livonia
Windsor, Onatrio*

To The Newly Bereaved - You Are Not Alone

When your child has died, suddenly it seems like all meaning has been drained from your life. When you wake in the morning, it's difficult to get out of bed, much less live a "normal" life. All that was right with the world now seems wrong and you're wondering when, or if, you'll ever feel better. We've been there ourselves and understand some of the pain you are feeling right now. We are truly glad that you have found us but profoundly saddened by the reason. We know that you are trying to find your way for which no one can truly be prepared. When you're newly bereaved, suddenly you find yourself on an emotional roller coaster where you have no idea what to expect next. Here are thoughts on some of what you may be experiencing or feeling and many of these will apply to bereaved siblings and grandparents:

Psychological

- Your memory has suddenly become clouded. You're shrouded in forgetfulness. You'll be driving down the road and not know where you are or remember where you're going. As you walk, you may find yourself involved in "little accidents" because you're in a haze.
- You fear that you are going crazy.
- You find there's a videotape that constantly plays in an endless loop in your mind, running through what happened.
- You find your belief system is shaken and you try to sort out what this means to your faith.

- Placing impossible deadlines on yourself, you go back to work, but find that your mind wanders and it's difficult to function efficiently or, some days, at all. Others wonder when you'll be over "it," not understanding that you'll never be the same person, and the passage of time will not make you so.

- You find yourself reading the same paragraph over and over again trying to understand what someone else has written.

Emotional

- You rail against the injustice of not being allowed the choice to die instead of your child.

- You find yourself filled with anger, whether it be at your partner, the person responsible for your child's death, God, yourself, and even your child.

- You yearn to have five minutes, an hour, a day back with your child so you can tell your child of your love or thoughts left unsaid.

- Guilt becomes a powerful companion as you blame yourself for the death of your child. Rationally you know that you were not to blame, you most certainly would have saved your child if you'd been given the chance.

- You feel great sadness as you wrestle with the idea that everything important to you has been taken; and your future has been ruined.

Physical

- Either you can't sleep at all or you sleep all the time. You feel physical exhaustion even when you have slept.

- You no longer care about your health and taking care of yourself; it just doesn't seem that important anymore.

- You're feeling anxiety and great discomfort you're told they're panic attacks.

- The tears come when you least expect them.

- Your appetite is either gone or you find yourself overeating.

Family & Social

- If you have surviving children, you find yourself suddenly overprotective, not wanting to allow them out of your sight. Yet you feel like a bad parent

because it's so difficult to focus on their needs when you're hurting so bad yourself.

- You find that your remaining family at home grieves the loss differently and you search for a common ground which seems difficult to find.

- You've been told by well-meaning people, even professionals, that 70-80-90 percent of all couple's divorce after their child dies. You are relieved to find that new studies show a much lower divorce rate, from 12-16%, believed to be caused by the "shared experience" aspect of the situation.

- Old friends seem to fade away as you learn they cannot comprehend the extent or length of your grief.

- Things you liked to do which seemed so important before now seem meaningless.

- Others say you'll someday find "closure," not understanding that closure never applies when it is the death of your child.

- Fleeting thoughts of pleasurable activities bring about feelings of guilt. If your child can't have fun, neither can you.

- New friends come into your life who understands some of your grief because they've been there themselves.

Finding the New Me

- When you're newly bereaved, you don't see how you can put one foot in front of the other, much less survive this loss. You'll never "recover" from your loss nor will you ever find that elusive "closure" they talk of on TV but eventually you will find the "new me."

- You will never be the same person you were before your child died. It may be hard to believe now, but in time and with the hard work of grieving, you will one day think about the good memories of when your child lived rather than the bad memories of how your child died. You will even smile and, yes, laugh again.

- When the newly bereaved come to a meeting of The Compassionate Friends, you will be able to listen and learn from others who are further

down the grief road than you.

- They will have made it through that first birthday, first death anniversary, first holiday, and so many other firsts that you have not yet reached. You will learn coping skills from other bereaved parents who never thought they'd survive.

There are no strangers at TCF meetings only friends you have not yet met. More than 18,000 people a month find the support they are seeking through meetings of The Compassionate Friends. The TCF has many ways of providing support including: our national website and Online Support Community; We Need Not Walk Alone, our national magazine available by free online subscription; our monthly online e-newsletter which talks about the organization and its events; our Facebook Page with over 50,000 members; our Worldwide Candle Lighting each December; our national conference; and our Walk to Remember and our Memphis Newsletter. We will be here as long as you need us. Even though you are newly bereaved and the road is long, we invite you to walk with us for as long as the journey takes.

TCF National Organization & Memphis Chapter Steering Committee



The Compassionate Friends

11th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 23, 2019 at 1:00 pm

(Registration will begin at 12:15 pm)

Westland Bowl

5940 N. Wayne Road

Westland, MI 48185

(On east side of Wayne Rd ¼ mile north of Ford Rd just past Red Lobster)

Any questions please contact Cindy Stevens @ 734-837-3722

Or Mary Hartnett @ 313-550-5410

\$25 per person

*(Includes: 3 games (9 pin no tap), shoes, 2 mystery game drawings, 2 slices of pizza)
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes*

Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)

Mail to: 25164 Hanover St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

OPEN TO PUBLIC

SIBS

Adult Sibling Grief

The death of a sibling is the most neglected loss in adult life. Loss of a sibling means loss of someone who knew your formative past. And there may be guilt feelings related to unresolved issues with the sibling. When adults lose a sibling, they often feel abandoned by society. Sympathy is extended to parents, or to the sibling's spouse and children, but brothers and sisters are supposed to "get over it" quickly so they can comfort others or "replace" the lost sibling. This is one reason why adult sibling loss falls into the category of "disenfranchised grief." When society fails to validate the grief and sadness of siblings, they do not receive the support necessary to heal. There is a tendency for the griev-

ing sibling to then go into hiding with their feelings.

Life Changes in an Instant : When adults lose a brother or sister, the following are some of the issues they deal with and may need to resolve or work through:

Seeking a New Identity:

When someone has been a part of your life since birth, they are part of the field or background from which you live your life, and as such they are essential. They make up part of the unbroken wholeness that defines who you are. When the first child is born, he or she develops certain characteristics and talents. The children born later are likely to choose different characteristics to develop and to excel in so they will be different from each other. The first

child may become a star athlete, while the next sibling excels in academics. The siblings support each other through their differences. In doing so, siblings actually loan each other their strengths. When one of the siblings dies, that strength is lost, and the survivor's identity with it. It takes time to learn how to live your life again. You have to grow within yourself the parts once carried by your brother or sister. You don't "get over" this as much as "grow through" it.

The Loss of a Future With Your Sibling :

Not only have you lost the actual person and your relationship with them, but you have lost the part they would have played in your future. You go on to marry, have children, buy a house, succeed or fail, retire. Each event underlines the terrible reality that your brother or sister is not there. Forever after, all events, no matter how wonderful, have a bittersweet flavor. So-called anniversary reactions can plague the surviving sibling on birthdays or holidays and other special occasions.

Caregiving:

What prevents many bereaved siblings from processing their own grief is their desire to protect someone—perhaps their parents, spouse or children. The focus on being there for someone else allows them to put their own grief process on hold. One of the most commonly noted responses to sibling loss is that surviving siblings learn to accept the grief of others. They are "compulsive caregivers": They have been there—they know what it is like—so they can listen to others who are grieving. his or her best self.

Assert Yourself: Society may not recognize the intensity of sibling loss, but bereaved siblings know that the loss has a real, sometimes devastating impact on them. You yourself may have to educate the people around you and ask for their much-needed support. Assert yourself and ask for what you need.

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.



Snow

Every snowflake that falls is unique and has its own individual design. There are beautiful patterns in each snowflake and even the tiniest of flakes have their own markings. These patterns change again and again—even after the flake touches the ground. Each snowflake is a cause for wonder, each flake is one of a kind. No two are exactly alike. Like the snowflake, our beautiful children were each unique and special; some we only dreamed about and some danced upon the earth. They filled our lives with wonder and transformed our world. We held them too briefly, but we will hold them in our hearts forever. We shall remember them always. At this time of remembering, it may help to reflect upon how our lives have been enriched by the love we have given and the love we have received from our children. Our children leave treasures behind that time can never take away.

Denise Falzon, TCF Lake Area, MI

After the First Year

After the first year the pain changes from a crushing weight to a wickedly cutting edge. Time speeds up from a grinding plodding to a more normal routine. And sometimes you forget, for a moment, that your whole life was destroyed just last year. After the first year you start to remember the good times. You can tell a funny story

about your child and save the crying for later. But sometimes it seems like you're the only one left who mourns. "What's the matter with you anyway? It's been a whole year." After the first year your child seems a little closer and yet still so far away. Miracle of miracles, you haven't forgotten how he walks, his voice, the shape of his head, or the solid warmth of his fingers curving around yours. Those memories ambush you at many unlikely moments and tear you apart. After the first year, your heart begins to thaw. You remember that you once loved your surviving children and you love them once again. You remember that life used to hold joy; and you rediscover some small enjoyment in living. You learn to piece your life back together in a different pattern. After the first year you pick up your burdens and go on. Amazingly you have survived a blow more painful than anything you ever imagined. Even though you wish you had died too, it slowly dawns on you that you must still live because after the first year, comes the second year.

Liz Ford, TCF Madison, WI

New Sharing Table

We are adding an Infant Loss Sharing Table to our meeting led by Michelle Ciemnicki. Please come and join if you would like to be a part of this sharing table.



Chapter News

• Please welcome Michelle Ciemnicki as a new Chapter Leader for Livonia, she is joining Joyce Gradinscak and Catherine Walker to help lead our Chapter.

• We want to thank everyone who helped us with our candle lighting event this year. Thank you to City of Plymouth and Chris Porman for the use of beautiful Kellogg Park; The Sinagra's and Jeff Reynolds from American Speedy Printing for the ornaments; Kevin Moss and Theresa Flores for the printing of our candle lighting programs; Jamie Fiegler for signing our event; all the parents who showed up to complete the ornaments and drive to the park to decorate the trees; Vince Fregonara for the reading of the program; Gail Lafferty for the Lighting of the Candle; Rhonda Temple and Kevin Moss for reading of the names; Rhonda Temple & Jamie Fiegler for the power point presentation; Kathy Rambo & Joyce Gradinscak for keeping the new ornaments added to the trees; those who helped with new additions to the list and questions that night and all who were helpful in their own special ways. Most of all...we thank all those who made the trip to the park that evening. And we light our candles...In memory of our beautiful children, grandchildren and siblings who have died to soon...so that their light may always shine.

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 "This will be our 5th Christmas without you. Love you & miss you Justin!
XOXO – Love Mom & Matt"
- ♥ Mary Himm "In remembrance of my dear daughter Maureen Himm Cartwright"
- ♥ Deborah Roe "In memory of my son Robert, Forever in my heart!"
- ♥ Joyce & Robert Gradinscak "14 Christmas's without you Adam. Love Mom, Dad, Jamie & Dave"
- ♥ Flora Cocora & Christina Hebert "In loving memory of son, grandson Blaise Christian Hebert; son, brother Nicholas Eugene Cocora, Jr.; brother, uncle Attorney George Nickolas Subu. Always in our hearts and prayers.
- ♥ The Sampson Family "In memory of Matthew. We love you and miss you so much."
- ♥ V. Robert & Mary Vitolins "In memory of Laura. Miss you every day – you were our pride and joy.
Love, Mom, Dad and Karen"
- ♥ Glenn & Dorothy Laswell "In memory of Christine Kramis. We miss you every day Christine.
Love, Mom, Dad and Tammy"
- ♥ Theresa Henry "In memory of my son Ryan Birmingham"

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

January 2019

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



January Craft

Our Craft Day will be Saturday, January 26, 2019 from 10 am to 1 pm at the Plymouth Library. We will be making "Memory Flags" (like Prayer Flags). All supplies will be provided but if you have special fabric, charms, buttons or anything of your child, grandchild or sibling you would like to use, please bring with you. There will be a sample at the January meeting and a sign up sheet. Any questions, please call Gail or Kathy. Cost: \$5.00