

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



March 2021
Volume 33, Number 3

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:

March 4- see info about meeting on
Page 7
No Craft Day

March 16: 6:30 pm TCF Dinner-at
Richard's Family Restaurant, 39305
Plymouth Rd., Livonia 48150. For more
information, call Kathy 734-306-3930 or
katjrambo@gmail.com

July 2021- Virtual International TCF
Conference. More details to follow.

The Luck of the Irish??

My name should have been O'Loder, for it seemed like I had the luck of the Irish. After all, I grew up in a great home with a wonderful family. I received an excellent education. I got a great job where I met a special person who became my life's partner. I began my own business, which became very successful.

And the greatest luck of all—my daughter was born. It wasn't planned, but God knew what was best. Three years later we were blessed with a son. Stef and Steve lived and played together with a special love.

I still remember the St. Patrick's Day assignment Stef brought home only days before the accident that took her life and that of her brother. Asked to tell why she was lucky, she wrote, "because I have a brother!"

A few days later my life lay in a shambles—the best part of my life gone. Stef was only eight and Stephen just five. They hadn't had a chance to really experience what life was all about. It was painfully obvious my name did not start with an O'.

Three years have now passed since that day. The shock of the moment has worn off. My wife and I have somehow survived the deaths and now have a new wonderful son and daughter with which to share our lives—and our love.

But, perhaps, the luckiest thing of all that happened to us since the accident is that we have made new, very special friends—Compassionate Friends who have helped us with our survival.

We have a new family of special people who have survived the unluckiest day of their lives and are able to share their loss with us. Isn't this really what "luck" is all about?

Here are two name poems we just received from one very special Compassionate Friend, Sandy Roush, which she wrote specially for our Stephanie and Stephen:

Sent by God, she
Touched our lives
Ever in our hearts
Precious child
How we miss you
And await our reunion
Never really far away
In God's loving arms
Eternity is ours

Song of my heart
Taken too soon
Ever loving son
Pleasing to God
He holds you now
Everlasting life
Now awaits in heaven

Wayne Loder

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

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



The Evolution of Grieving

July 30th marked the ninth anniversary of my son David's death. Since that day, I have been mourning his loss. I am not being morbid or hyperbolic; just descriptive, stating a fact. I suffer Perpetual Sorrow Syndrome, the unquenchable yearning for a lost loved one which has become a chronic condition hardwired into the mental infrastructure. Yet as time passes, our relationship—the bond between David and me—has changed. I have learned to practice managed mourning. I see my progress as the evolution of grieving.

In many ways, the loss of my child is more concrete today than it was earlier in the cycle of mourning where returning to some approximation of normalcy was overwhelming. For a long while, the finality of him being gone forever could not be comprehended. I imagined him entering into the house, saw him on the street, and heard his voice. These apprehensions seemed so tangible. Often, I had dreams in which I was able to intervene and reverse the outcome of his fate. Real life was the nightmare I woke up to. During this period, I was negotiating a foreign territory where the physical environment was recognizable, but not familiar. I felt constantly disoriented and frightened, a sense of dread looming everywhere. There was the avatar of myself going about the business of eating, sleeping, working, while an identical human representation followed behind; a lost soul, stranger to herself and her surroundings, clueless and confused about where she was and what she was doing.

I wasn't psychotic, just in the acute phase of grieving. Simmering below the predictable sadness and loneliness was guilt, rage, self-pity, resentment, depression, and many other negative, self-defeating turns that the human psyche takes after deep trauma and tragedy.

There are many factors including time, serious introspection, religious rituals, searching and discovering

ways to honor the memory of the child, and reaching out to other bereaved parents to help a parent function after a child's death. Many occasions remain painful and fraught with anxiety and melancholy—the empty chair at family celebrations, noting the milestones of your child's contemporaries, responding to queries from new acquaintances about your children, growing old without the company and support of a son or daughter. Still, the months and then years move forward, and it sinks in that you are still in the land of the living (yes, it is possible!), but your beloved child, ever present in your consciousness, exists in some other sphere of being. Miraculously, it seems, but not until you are emotionally ready, comes acceptance. The next phase in the evolution of grieving has arrived.

As I approach completing a decade since that sweltering summer day (was I in hell?) when we buried my son, I want to explore the possibility of moving beyond acceptance to a higher spiritual goal: to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Just writing this fills me with astonishment since I still believe there can never be anything positive about the untimely passing of a young person. But I am willing to open my heart to truths I previously denigrated and dismissed as wishful and naive. I want to embrace the blessing of the time spent with my son rather than bemoan the curse of his death. I want to take comfort in the knowledge that each of us has a purpose on the earth, a mission to fulfill in the eternal unfolding of existence. The worth of life cannot be measured in the number of years an individual lives. Of course, we bereaved parents would have wished our children a long, happy, healthy stay on this planet, lasting much beyond our own departure. Of course, we will grieve for them until we too have shed our physical container, and are no longer matter but pure energy, ready to join our children as part of the creative force that fuels the eternal cosmos.

The years of David's life were diminished, but not its worth. I want to be able to let go of the what ifs and if onlys that surround his death; to give up the fantasies of what he could have been, done, achieved had he been granted a normal lifespan. I want to focus on the special joy, insight, and pleasure he brought to those who knew and loved him. The thoughts of him and what he means to me have allowed me to manage my mourning and go on with my life. I have learned from his destiny, the immeasurable value of life that must be revered and respected unconditionally, and the indestructible power of love that transcends even death. It was his gift to me, which I accept with gratitude, even as I continue to mourn his loss. This, I believe, is the next stage in the evolution of grief.

Nora Yood

Nora Yood's son David died at age 30 in July of 2007. He had just turned 30 a few weeks earlier. Nora lives in New York City and the Manhattan Chapter of TCF has been a support and comfort for her and a "very significant force" in her healing and acceptance of the reality of her son's death. She can be reached at nbmjdy@gmail.com.

Cherie's Poem to Chloe

You left us 18 months ago
You left without goodbye
You left us all so suddenly
without us understanding why
You left us with an emptiness
A void we cannot fill
You left us broken-hearted
You left a dejected will.

We're told that it gets easier-
Just take it day by day
We're told the sadness fades-
That the pain will go away
We're told you're in a better place-
one we've never known
We're told you have a special spot-
We're told you're not alone.

But how do we move forward
without your smiling face?
How do we hold our memories?
How do we slow the pace?

How do we find peace
When we've been dealt this hand?
How do we find courage?
How do we make a stand?

I wonder what you'd look like
if you had turned 13
I wonder if you'd be the angel
you had always been
I wonder if we'd known
that May 13 was your last day
I wonder if given the chance
We'd say the things we wanted to say.

I'd say that you were beautiful
you were sweet & kind & smart,
I'd say you meant the world to me.
You had a special place in my heart.
I'd say please reassure us
that we will be okay
that we will still find happiness
that the pain will go away.

Time keeps ticking onwards
But the blackness still remains.
Life keeps moving forward
But our lives are rearranged.
Another anniversary
No easier than the last.
Another day without you,
Another day has passed.
Cherie Douglas

Spring Is Coming

If you are newly bereaved and looking toward your "first spring," you may be surprised by some of the feelings you may experience during the next few weeks. We hear so much about the beauty of spring, the new life and the feelings of renewal that are supposed to accompany this lovely time of year. During my "first year," I expected that spring would cheer me up, and make me feel lots better. How surprised and frustrated I was when, on one of those truly magnificent spring days as flowers seemed to burst forth everywhere, I was "in the pits." When a friend said to me, "Doesn't a day like this really lift your spirits and make you feel better?" - I had to reply honestly that I was having a really bad day - that the sense of loss and emptiness was greatly intensified.

Gradually I began to realize that my expectations for spring were unrealistically high. I had looked forward to spring with the wrong kind of hope. When we are newly bereaved, we are constantly looking for something to take away the pain and make our lives alright again. Unfortunately, there is no magic event or moment when this takes place. It does happen, but only with time and the grief work which we all must do before we can be healed.

The coming of spring cannot make everything okay again. What it can do, however, is remind us that regardless of what happens in our lives, nature's process will continue, and that can offer us hope. I am looking forward to spring this year. I welcome the sun's warmth, the return of the birds from their winter in the south, and forsythia, the daffodils, and the greening of the world. Know that someday you will once again welcome spring. Be gentle and patient with yourself and with nature. Don't expect too much. Be ready to let a little of the hope that spring can offer into your heart.

*Evelyn Billings
TCF Spring MA*

What TCF Means to Me

Grief was not a stranger at our house - we had felt the anguish from the death of older family members, friends who had died during the Vietnam War, and the day to day losses we face most every day. In the first six months after the death of our son, the mechanics of responding to memorials, flowers and letters gave me an excuse to keep the door closed on that unwelcome guest who waited outside.

But the day did come when I didn't have the energy to keep that door locked. It burst open with a terrifying sound - sobs racked my body most of my waking hours, my chest hurt and I couldn't breathe, and worst of all, I looked around and saw that I was alone. Oh, there were people around me but we didn't speak the same language. I wanted to talk about the death of my son and how afraid I was that I was indeed losing my mind

and that I should be doing a lot better than I was. I wanted to verbalize my pain, my anger, my fear, but I didn't have a willing audience. They tried to listen to me at first but it was too painful for them; they wanted me to be doing better so they wouldn't be worried about me.

This feeling of being unable to cope with my grief is what prompted me to find help. I wanted someone to tell me what I could do to make my life and the lives of my loved ones better. I had lost my optimism and I wanted it back - NOW. In addition, I wanted some concrete answers - from God or anyone else who could supply them. I took all of this personal business to my first meeting of The Compassionate Friends. There were several people who were newly bereaved at that first meeting. In listening to them, I learned that several were experiencing the same things I was; several were dealing with problems I didn't have. I learned that in talking openly some of my fears began to get smaller so that I could recognize and deal with them. I learned what SUPPORT really means - people willing to walk with me those first miles into that dark forest of bereavement, holding my hand, encouraging me to forge ahead on my own, but also willing to come back and get me when I would drop in my tracks. I learned that these were the same people with whom I could learn to laugh again; and these were the people who would ask me to help someone else who came through the door for the first time with that telltale imprint of grief. I learned how differently we grieve and I learned that accepting that difference is a milestone in the healing process.

I will be forever grateful to those farseeing people who had the wisdom to start TCF in this area and to those who are committed to seeing that this vital group continues. My optimism has been restored; God is giving me the answer I seek and He is doing it through other grieving parents.

*Gretel Ekbaum
TCF, Jackson Mississippi*

SIBS

Sibling Grief

Echoes of each other's being.

Whose eyes are those that look like mine?

Whose smile reminds me of my own?

Whose thoughts come through with just a glance?

Who knows me as no other's do?

Who in the whole wide world is most like me

yet not like me at all?

My sibling.

Faber & Mazlish, 1989

So often the death of a sibling is dismissed, unrecognized or even ignored. The assumption is that perhaps it is

not as devastating as a parent losing a child, a wife losing a husband, or even a child losing a parent. Yet, our siblings are one of the longest lasting relationships we will ever have.

Siblings define our past, are key in our "evolution" of our identity, and they know all of the intricacies of our families. Our siblings saw us in the best of times and in the worst. There is no other relationship like the sibling connection. In an instant your world changed when your brother or sister died. In an instant, your entire family changed forever.

The impact of losing a sibling has many layers and hits on many levels. You might feel guilt that you are the one that survived, you may feel confusion about what role you now play in the family, you may be angry that your

family has changed so drastically, and the sadness you experience can be indescribable.

To quote the title of a superb book- Invisible Heroes (Naparstek, B), which outlines the impact trauma has on the body, this title also represents survivors of sibling loss. Many often feel invisible as their grief is so vastly overlooked.

In efforts to combat feeling invisible, make your loss and your grief known. Educate others about how sibling grief shapes you. Just as there was a connection before your sibling died, there can be after the death as well.

Pay tribute and honor your brother or sister often. Say their name, tell their story, do random acts of kindness as a means of memorializing. Just as the poem suggests, don't allow the "echo of your being" to be forgotten. It was an important relationship and will forever be.

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 Thursday 7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

South Rockwood TCF Chapter: Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive. South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469

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



Most siblings will spend 80% to 100% of their lifetimes with their siblings on this earth... it is a really, really big deal to lose a sibling. Very significant, but it's very unacknowledged.

DR. HEIDI HORSLEY
MINDFULNESS & GRIEF PODCAST
EPISODE 26



PLEASE REMEMBER

Siblings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least

Livonia Chapter Page

A Note from our Chapter Leadership

Our next meeting will be on March,4 2021.

We will have a virtual meeting via Zoom starting at 7 pm.

Our meeting place, St. Timothy's Pres. Church, is still limiting our group from using the church. We are hopeful that we might be able to start meeting in person in April. Please contact Gail (angel4gail2016@gmail.com) if you are interested in being included in our Zoom meetings. Your email addresses will be kept on file to use on any future Zoom meetings.

Please take good care of yourselves ... and be safe.

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.

♥ Brendolyn Jasper "In memory of Jeffrey Parker. Happy Heavenly Birthday, Love Mom & Kymberlee"

Let Us Celebrate Their Births - continued

My Dear One, I feel you so strongly, in the music I listen to, and yes, you are in my almost every thought though I try not to make others feel uncomfortable. Everyday, it is necessary that in some way, I see you or hear you or feel you. For how could I go on otherwise? Knowing you were in my life, that you came to be with me, I am blessed. You have given me gifts that continue to unfold and I can only say that without you, I would not stand where I am now.

I live in two worlds and sometimes, I feel closer to pain and grief than to joy. It is indeed a strange thing to say, though those who have experienced it understand.

I find you my darling, in every living thing and you must certainly hear me say "I love you" many times during the day. I want to do something everyday that honors you and the life you lived and how you touched so many people, today as well as then.

You are there in the vastness of the night sky. Your spirit has been released into all that is, so I must learn to recognize you, not by how you looked, but by your presence. I look at your

pictures and it is as if no time has gone by and we are together. I can hear your voice and smell your skin. You will always be my baby, the one I nurtured and loved, forever a part of my bones and blood, we were woven together by love. I will plant seeds in your name and watch them grow. I will write a song for you and a poem too. Those who live beyond you already know stories of you and have a sense of who you were when you were here. When I go walking in the woods, I will find you there. How could I not? You are one with nature. I hear you when the wind blows through the trees and, when the hoot owl calls, you come to me.

In the bustle of the city, where everything seems to go at once, yes, I have felt you at my side. Or sometimes, I have to do a double take, so sure it was you standing there, talking to a friend.

There are days when I am doing okay and the pain of losing you is at bay, but at any moment, my whole being can be thrown to the ground with the realization you are not here with me.

There are times that bring me to my

knees, when one of your friends has had a baby or gotten married. It should have been you as well.

It should be you who falls in love and finds such joy in their life. It should be you whose passion for living brings you on paths of incredible discoveries. I shout your name in love and honor. I am forever indebted to you for giving me life. Thank you.

I've watched the birds flying under and over each other in the sky, grey clouds and wild green pastures and you were there!

The sprouting leaves of new, shiny growth, about to open to the new day. It is you, I am sure. How can it be any other way but that you are the molecules that I breathe, that you are the rays in the sun that touch my eyes and filter into every cell of my body?

The glow that casts its light on me in the orange of a sunset, I see you, and though I can distinguish many colors, the colors that make up you are beyond my scope here on this earthly plane but I know you are indeed.... everywhere. Thank you.

*Karen Hazelwood-Dantone
TCF Eugene Oregon*

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

March 2021

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

Remember Me

To the living, I am gone,
To the sorrowful, I will never
return,
To the angry, I was cheated,
But to the happy, I am at peace,
And to the faithful, I have never
left.
I cannot speak, but I can listen.
I cannot be seen, but I can be heard.
So as you stand upon a shore
gazing at a beautiful sea,
As you look upon a flower and
admire its simplicity,
Remember me.
Remember me in your heart:
Your thoughts, and your memories,
Of the times we loved,
The times we cried,
The times we fought,
The times we laughed.
For if you always think of me, I
will never have gone.
Margaret Mead