

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



March 2017
Volume 29, Number 2

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

Chapter Leader

Joyce Gradinscak
Catherine Walker
Sally Cassidy
734-778-0800

Newsletter Editor

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

Treasurer

Rhonda Temple
25164 Hanover St.
Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

Meeting Information

When: First Thursday of
each month. 7-9 p.m.
Where: St. Timothy's Church
16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,
East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of
Six Mile

Coming Events:

NEXT MEETING -March 2 - New members, siblings, topic tables: Topic: Can you add any lessons to the Seven Lessons article?

March 11th - Bowling Fund Raiser
see page 7

March 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@wowway.com.

March 25 - Craft Day - see pg. 8

March

It is March. What a strange time of the year. One day is spring, and the next day it is winter again. And yesterday, when the wind picked up some forgotten leaves and whirled them around my feet, I felt as if fall were in the air. I've never liked March very much. Maybe it reminds me too much of my own life; my own grief process; one day up and the next day down, up and down in one day! I felt as if I could never enjoy the good days, because I knew a bad day would follow. Just like March, never trust the sunshine and warmth, because tomorrow a bitter wind will blow and clouds will darken the sky.

Sometimes I would even rush through a happy moment just to get it over with, just to hurry on to the grief. Or even borrow tomorrow's grief to avoid today's joy. Why trust the happiness when I know that I will be crying soon? Close the windows and block out today's sun, because it will probably rain tomorrow. How long did I live like that? Years. For years I hid from March's sunshine. I can't tell you when I realized that I could live one moment at a time and accept what was in that moment. If I am crying and in pain, okay, that is what it is in that moment. On the other hand, if I am smiling and cheerful, that is what it is in that moment.

BJ, TCF, Bloomington, IN

Spring

Spring is an amazing season when after a long, gray and dreary winter, color suddenly bursts forth. The golden crocus tries to peek out, sometimes not even waiting for all the snow to melt. Daffodils bloom in the color of sunshine, and tulips in a rainbow of hues dazzle our eyes. But, if we pause and let our minds wander back over all those months while the bulbs lay buried in the earth, we realize that what we see in the spring could not be possible without the cold, dark winter. While the bulb lay nestled in the earth, it found sustenance there. And although we were unaware, the first stirrings of life had begun. Roots were reaching down into the soil for anchor and nourishment. But as we looked to the plot of ground we had labored to plant, we could see no noticeable signs of life, and our patience to wait grew thin. Even though we did not realize it, the bulb has been persistently growing, patiently reaching for the light.

I have steadily struggled to survive, and after months of existing in darkness and silence, a shoot has finally appeared. At last, the season we recognize as the time of new life has arrived, the season we longed for in the deep of winter, the season prized for its beauty, spring is finally here.

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.

Let Us Remember Them Always

Child Parent, Grandparent, Sibling Date Age

Names withheld to protect the privacy of the family.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

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.

- ♥ Elizabeth Golen “In memory of my Andrew. Happy St. Patrick’s Day! Love, Mom”
- ♥ JoAnne Tappan “In memory of Kevin Joseph Tappan. Many Happy Birthday memories”
- ♥ Joyce Grandinscak “Adam – Your 12th Angel Day. Missing you always. Love, Mom, Dad, Jamie & Dave”
- ♥ Mom, Brendolyn & Sister Kym “Happy Birthday Jeffrey, we love you!”

But the process that made the beauty possible took place in the darkness and the silence long before the blooms ever appeared. If you had never experienced spring in all of its beauty, would you know, looking at a seemingly lifeless bulb, that glorious life was indeed bound dormant there?

As you think of your own pain, the numbing, consuming grief, remember the bulb and do not fear the darkness or the slow painful journey toward the light. Tend the garden of your grief well, till the soil in sorrow, sow it in tears. As winter gives way to spring, so, too, in its season, will your grief give way to healing, and it will bloom beautiful and fragrant to grace the world.

Annette Gildemann

Grief is Timeless

Six years. Has it been that long? Hasn't it been longer? Grief has no time line. The days melt into each other. The sun continues to rise and set. The months come and go. The seasons change. The years mount one on top of the other. How can this be? Don't they know that my son died?

Six years ago today his day began but his life ended. At 23 years old he had plans, dreams, goals and a future. He possessed a portion of my future that unfortunately went with him. As a parent I had hopes and dreams for him. My job as parenting was done. It was his time to spread his wings and soar. I had done all I could. We had weathered the colicky nights together. Many miles were put on the car as I, like many young mothers, drove around at 3:00 a.m. to soothe him. It wasn't about me losing sleep; it was about protecting and caring for my child. It was inherent and instinctual. The fevers, the chicken pox, the flu were tended to. Trips to the doctor were countless.

Before I knew it school days were upon us. The first day of Kindergarten was traumatic for me as I couldn't imagine letting go of my child. Who would care for him and love him during those four hours at school? Well,

as it turned out, me. We walked hand in hand down the hall reading the names on the door to see where he would be each day when he wasn't in my care. I led him into the classroom where we met his young, smiling teacher. He picked out a desk and I helped him unpack his new backpack. We carefully placed his brilliant, unused Crayolas, unopened bottle of glue and blunt scissors in his desk. How could I leave this child of mine with these strangers? They didn't know that he had trouble pronouncing his "R's". Who would cut the crust off his sandwich? They didn't know him. I stayed until it became obvious that these miniature desks and chairs were meant for the five year old kindergarteners and not the parents. Determined that I could do this, I walked out. I turned once to wave and took about a dozen steps back towards my empty, quiet house. But what harm would it do to walk back by and peek in? I did this about half a dozen times. Each time Rick would wave. Finally, the teacher came to the door and asked if there was anything she could do for me.

After a brief discussion, it was decided that she would absolutely need an aide to hand out papers, wipe noses, and just be there for good measure. I became a regular at the school. For each year of his elementary career I was there. Watching this little miracle of mine learn his way in the world filled me with such joy!

I have been forced to find my way after Rick drowned in a tragic accident at the young age of 23. He loved what he did and where he lived. He woke up daily to nature at its finest but raw and untamed. This is what he had dreamed of as a perfect career. I worried but had refrained from interfering as this was what letting go was all about. Wasn't this all going according to plan? Hadn't we covered all the bases? Maybe not. But if I had known how it would play out would I have done things differently?

No. His childhood and my years of motherhood were played out exactly as they should have. They were the

best years of my life. I have such wonderful memories of my beautiful son. He was the best of me and the best of my husband. We created a miracle and I wouldn't trade that. No, I wouldn't have missed the dance. I live with great grief but thankfully not guilt because I did the absolute best I could and I am certain that he knew we loved him every day of his life. He had a short life but a good one. He was one of the happiest people I have ever known. He taught me as much as I taught him. He is a blessing to me. No, I wouldn't have missed the dance.

Dana Rogers

TCF Galveston Co. Chapter

Tissues, Tears and Treasures

A circle of chairs, boxes of tissues, a roomful of tears and emotional issues. Frightening at first, I did not want to enter into this strange group, and be in the center. What I soon learned, as we sat side by side, we were bound by the love of our children who died. Each shattered heart, desperately seeking a moment of peace, from the pain and weeping.

So many yet all the same, hearts lost in a fog of loss and pain. Those who have journeyed, much further than me, reached out in comfort, and listened quietly. Each shattered heart spoke, and the tissues were passed. We never avoid speaking of the past.

This circle of friends, have found a bond, and here I'm still known as "Tony's Mom". Slowly I've found I can reach out to others who are newly bereaved, fathers and mothers. Strength I have found in this circle of chairs, to grieve and to heal and to show that we care.

Diane Barta

TCF, Portland, OR

Hold the date – Sunday, August 13th
1st Annual – The Compassionate Friends
– Livonia Family Picnic
More info will be provided at the March
meeting
And future newsletters

Seven Lessons

1). Love never dies.

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased child as normally and naturally as you speak of your living ones.

I love my child just as much as you love yours— the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn't so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn't stop me from saying my son's name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn't make him matter any less. My son's life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

2). Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.

In my seven years navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds— a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we've never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It's a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

3). I will grieve for a lifetime.

Period. The end. There is no "moving on," or "getting over it." There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken

heart, no exilir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul. There will never come a time when I won't think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family. I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love lasts forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute over the course of a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday, milestone; should-be back-to-school years and graduations; weddings that will never be, grandchildren that should have been but will never be born— an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered *forever*.

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts forever. The bleeding never stops.

4). It's a club I can never leave, but is full of the most shining souls I've ever known.

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I've ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship— that we could have met another way— *any* other way but *this*. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors and thrivers. Warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining *the club*. If you've ever wondered who some of the greatest world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they

alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into legacy.

Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a lifeorce to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.

5). The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.

Empty chair, empty room, empty space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the space less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to "move on," or "stop dwelling," from well-intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. The problem is nothing can fill it. Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year the empty space remains. No matter how much time has passed.

The empty space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the space of that truth for us.

6). No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son.

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why *every* holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, truly are horrific. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children. Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two— *anything*— than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than living without one of more of your precious children. That is why holidays are *always and forever* hard

for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or even try to understand. Know you don't have to understand in order to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents at holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

7). Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary, in fact. It is not either/or, it's both/and. Grief and joy can and do coexist. My life is more rich now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve, I also know a joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far deeper and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depths of unimaginable pain, suffering and sorrow, again and again— when the joy comes, however and whenever it does— it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply. I embrace and thank every blessed morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but *because* of it. In grief there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all "worth" it, but I am grateful beyond words for each and every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say *thank you, thank you, thank you*. Because there is nothing— and I mean absolutely nothing— I take for granted. Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible.

I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given. Even death can't take that away.
Angela Millier



The Compassionate Friends

9th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, March 11th 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 Kathy Rambo @ 734-306-3930

\$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

Grandparents Remembrance

We are the grieving grandparents, the shepherds of our children and grandchildren's lives. Our grief is two-fold and at times we feel powerless to help. We seek to comfort our children in the depths of their grief and yet we need the time and space to face our own broken hearts. We have been robbed of the special tender touch a grandparent shares with a grandchild, and we have lost a symbol of our immortality. As

we walk by our child's side, we both give and draw strength. We reach into their hearts to comfort them, and when they reach out to us in their distress, we begin the journey to heal together. We continue to be their guardians. We allow traditions to change to accommodate their loss. We support the new ones, which symbolize the small steps on their journey. It is in their healing that our hearts find comfort.

Susan Mackey
TCF, Rutland, VT

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.

Paul Burger, whose beloved daughter, **Paul, Jr.**, Born 4/11; Died 12/18; 28 years

Wendy Daubenmeyer whose beloved son, **Drew**, Born 2/11; Died 11/27; 24 years

Joan McEachern whose beloved daughter, **Leah Chludzinski**, Born 8/19; Died 8/1; 37 years

SIBS

A Part of Me

You are not just my brother, but you were my friend as well. You were supposed to be here always or till the world came to an end. I know that we argued and seemed to disagree, but I could always count on you to be there for me. You may be gone from this world I see, but you will always be a part of me.

Donna Montville
TCF, Gardner, MA

Letting Go

You're still here in my heart and mind, still making me laugh cause your stories live on.

I hold you in a thought and I can feel you.

I feel you and this gives me strength and courage.

The tears I have cried for you could flood the earth

and I know you have wiped each one away.

For you Brother, I promise you this, I will go on with my life and make you proud. I will always hold you in my heart.

I promise you I will be missing you everyday till the end of time, but this is not my end and I can't hold my head underwater....I need to breathe.

I need to love and miss you, but I also need to live because through me you will live,

you will still laugh and love,
you will still sing and dance,
you will still hug and kiss.

You will forever be in our lives,

you will forever be a brother,
a son,
an uncle
and friend.

I am going to miss your shining face
I think of you and wonder why?

I might cry or smile,
but at the end of the day I am one day closer to you....

Shannon Billeter

Marc's Birthday

To my brother Marc in heaven:
Today, December 14, 2012 would be your 40th birthday. It has been 5 years since you left this Earth, but it seems like yesterday. I feel your presence often, and know you are watching over me always, my dear guardian angel. You are of the timeless and formless now, finally and completely free, free of pain, attachments, worldly thoughts, and all forms of suffering. I pray your transition was one of peaceful passing, as you transcended your human experience. You embody the spirit eternal now.

Today, here on earth, a tragedy took place, as I'm sure you already are aware. I know you will watch over these children whose lives were abruptly cut short today and empower their spirit to ease the suffering of their grieving loved ones here on Earth.

I miss you and love you, my dear brother . . . please continue to guide me in the right direction, to give me the strength and confidence I need to face my fears and conquer my demons as I navigate the bumpy roads on this journey called Life. I used to envision us sharing and supporting one another through life's defining moments . . . I still interact with you nightly in my dreams, only to awake and accept the reality of your physical absence daily. May you R.I.P. Marc. May your spirit soar gloriously above the heavens, gracefully free like a butterfly chasing a rainbow.

Lisa Pearlman, 12/14/12

TCF Metrowest Chapter, MA

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

Dave and Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006

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

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

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

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

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

TCF CHAT ROOM

www.compassionatefriends.org

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

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

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel: MikeFedela2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room)1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor

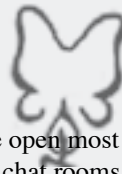
St. Clair Shores: 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, KJMac21@aol.com

Detroit: Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church, 12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.

Troy: St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday 7-9; Tina@586-634-0239

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

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



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

March 2017

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



March Craft Day

Our craft day will be Saturday March 25, it will be at St Timothy's Church. 16700 Newburgh RD. We will be putting our child's picture on a 4x4 tile. A 4x6 photo works best. If you do not have a picture of your child you can put a poem, their name, butterflies etc on the tile. The fee for this craft is \$4.00.