

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



May 2022  
Volume 34, Number 5

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

### Chapter Leader

Joyce Gradinscak  
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(734-778-0800)

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Mary Hartnett  
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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:

**May 5** - Monthly Chapter Meeting - see  
info on this page

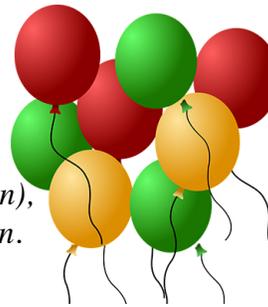
**May 7** - **CRAFT meeting** - pg 8

**May 14** - **Bowling Fund Raiser** -  
see this page for info

**May 17- 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner 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.

May 5:  
*Annual Balloon Lift*  
*Come to our meeting*  
*with family and friends*  
*to launch a balloon in*  
*memory of your child(ren),*  
*siblings or grandchildren.*  
*Balloons and note cards*  
*will be supplied.*



## The Compassionate Friends

### 13th Annual Bowling Fundraiser

In loving memory of all the children who died too soon

Saturday, May 14, 2022 at 1:00 pm  
(Registration will begin at 12:15 pm)

Vision Lanes  
38250 Ford Rd  
Westland, MI 48185  
(On Ford Rd & Hix)

Please let us know if you will be joining us so we can reserve lanes  
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 & pop)  
Additional Raffle Tickets will be sold for 50/50 drawing and Prizes

Please make check out to: The Compassionate Friends (Livonia)  
Mail to: Mary Hartnett 5704 Drexel St, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

OPEN TO PUBLIC

## May: The Unusually Difficult Month

For the bereaved parent, May is frequently the cruellest month. The month of May offers the rest of the world a promise of another carefree summer, swimming, family vacations, relaxation, reading, cook-outs and picnics, trips to the lake and so much that is inherent in our culture. Yet May also brings memories of our children.

The common denominator for mothers (and fathers) is Mother's Day. This tradition was wonderful when our children were alive, now the direct mail and newspaper advertising sentimental television spots, in-store promotions, cards and letters and the countdown to the day itself are very cruel reminders of our lost children. Who will remember us on Mothers Day?

This will be my fourth Mother's Day without my son. I miss him terribly all year long, but May and December are the worst months for me. First we have Mother's Day,

(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 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*

then my son's birthday and throughout the month I am bombarded with invitations for high school and college graduations each one reminding me of what once was. My son finishing grade school, high school, college, graduate school. Each was accompanied by a ceremony. All the ceremonies rush into my mind as I realize how much of myself is my memories and those memories are very entwined with my son's life. A big part of me died with him that night in December. Three years ago I was overwhelmed, sobbing, still occasionally in deep shock. My mind was mush, my heart was crushed and I did not have the will to do much more than quietly weep. It was my first Mother's Day without my son, the first birthday that he wasn't here, the first Memorial Day Weekend without him. I was paralyzed. May would never be joyful for me again. What to do ... what to do. I ask myself this question each April as we begin the romp up to the longest month. This year, I am counting out the last days of April and wondering how I will handle it. I am not worried about it; I am just wondering. I have gotten used to the transformation that has taken place in my mind, heart and soul. I experienced a slow spiritual awakening which accompanied a deep, deep sense of loss over which I have no control. I go with it.

There are questions that we must ask ourselves. The answers are unique to us.

Collectively we know this is a month to dread; individually we have our own memories and our own methods of coping. Collectively we lean on each other for hope, comfort and support. Individually, we each walk our own road depending on how many circumstances of life are in our month of May: Mother's Day, Memorial Day, birthdays, death anniversaries, graduations, weddings, baptisms, first communions, confirmations. How we handled the beginning of summer the end of the school year all of these events can bombard us in May. The

memories float into our minds like a mist that thickens into a heavy fog. We are enveloped in our fog of memories; the before death years come to us in a hodgepodge of the happiest times and clash with the reality of now. These are our memories, our children, and ultimately our choices. And there seems to be little joy we can take from this month of memories.

Once again, we make the decision. If we are not ready to acknowledge Mother's Day, we shouldn't do it. If we are facing other days in May that will tear at our hearts, we must plan for it. Some of us prefer to be alone and isolated. Others of us prefer to be with friends or family. Some of us go to the cemetery; others go to the park. Some read, watch movies, sit on the deck or simply rest. Others take a weekend trip, which puts them into a different state of reality. There are as many choices as there are parents who have lost their children. Consider your options. Be honest with yourself. Don't be pushed into anything. Take control. We each move forward toward hope at a different rate and in a different way. This is not about meeting the expectations of others; this is a personal journey toward peace and hope. It is your journey.

I will always miss my son. I will always feel deep sorrow at his uncompleted life. But I know that he would want me to move forward, move back into the sunshine that is life on this earth. I am working on it. Be patient with me. This is the most difficult road I have ever walked, but I am in motion, moving mostly forward and seeking something akin to peace, hope and tranquility. I will always be a work in progress.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin  
TCF/Katy, TX*

## My Memorial Day Experience

My Memorial Day experience came at Jacksonville Cemetery, where Jason is buried. It's an historic cemetery in a very natural woods setting. No grass

and at times, very little maintenance. Jason would like it. I went out with flowers, intending to rake some of the debris from the trees around his grave and of course, to be with my memories. Two women, one young, one very old, approached me. The younger said, "You don't get the day off even today?" I realized she thought I was an employee so I just said, "Well, it is Memorial Day after all." She asked for directions to the older, historic headstones. After giving some basic directions, I explained that although they would find headstones from the 1800's throughout the cemetery, the most historic section lay at the bottom of the hill and that directly below us is the Jewish section. For no apparent reason, I closed by saying we were standing in the Catholic section, where my son is buried. With that, they went on their way.

When I noticed they were back again, the younger woman gave me a touching apology for mistaking me for an employee of the cemetery and expressed her sympathy. The older woman spoke for the first time and asked how old was my son and how did he die. I assumed they were just curious and this would be the end of our recurring discussion so I gave my stock answer, "He died of suicide, at nineteen, in 1995." The older woman then said, "My only son died when he was twenty-one. I still miss him."

We visited a while longer about nothing in particular. Everything, important had already been said. It's these unexpected connections that touch me deeply. When I feel alone in my pain, when life makes no sense, it's a comfort to be reminded that death did not begin or end with Jason. Loss is an experience of the present, past, and the future. It is enduring. I can't, or won't imagine my future losses. My present loss is overwhelming, but it's in reflecting on the past that I find comfort. I can go on knowing that through the ages others have walked through grief and survived. I expect that from now on, every Memorial Day, I'll remember that chance encounter with another

mother whose son died many years before Jason. And I'll be reminded that all bereaved parents, for all time, are one in grief.

*Carol Clum  
TCF Medford OR*

## A Grieving Father Looks at Mother's Day

On Sunday, May 12, 2002, religious and secular institutions across our western hemisphere will celebrate Mother's Day. Corporate America will eagerly open its arms, that is its doors, to embrace Mom with sales. Florists will be working overtime to insure that floral bouquets arrive on time.

Restaurants will be offering special Mother's Day meals so families can honor mom by eating out. In synagogues, temples and places of worship, mothers will be honored in a variety of ways.

There will be silent, invisible mothers on that day. They will go unrecognized for the most part. They will be generally unnoticed. They will be even ignored. They are the grieving mothers. For them, the day is not a celebration, but endurance.

Mother's Day changes completely for them after the death of a child. The pain is a pain only another grieving mother can relate to. All of the imagery that is conjured up doesn't necessarily help either. The pages of the hymn book flutter with the images of a mother and her children. Read the titles of the songs as you flip the pages: "My Mother's Old Bible is True", "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?", "Mother's Prayers Have Followed Me", and "Are All the Children In?" Religious guidebooks and holy texts are filled with thousands of references and pictures of mothers nurturing their children. This motherly love is central to all the religions of the world. The implied message is that a mother's love for her children is a bond quite unlike any other. So the death of a child, to them, must feel quite unlike any other loss. These wonderful words and images which are meant to comfort, end up tormenting them.

I write this column as a grieving father. I share my insights from my personal experiences and my readings on child-loss. But a lot of my education has come from the truest source of all, my forever- best friend, Debby. She has taught me that a mother's pain is so inexplicable, except to other grieving mothers, because when their child dies, a unique bond is broken. I cannot understand this bond, because like all Dads, I am an outside observer, so many times in the birthing process. But I do know that this bond exists.

My many hours of watching The Discovery Channel and Animal Planet with my son, Carl, taught me lessons, nature's lessons. Never mess with mothers! Here's a reason why mother bears have their reputations. They fiercely protect their young. There is a deep, mysterious and unique relationship that a mother has with her child.

Pregnancy is the start of a bond, which men cannot fully understand. The intricacies of feeding, nurturing and protecting that new life is beyond the scope of male experience. It just boggles my mind that my wife did all those jobs 24 hours a day, and still worked a regular job too. Fathers are sort of detached observers in the birth process. Mothers are participants in the clearest meaning of the word. Their bodies work all day and night. They feel the movements of the new life within them; endure the hardships and sicknesses. Go through intense ups and downs. Live with the sheer terror of the unknown. Mix all of these ingredients together and the result becomes a spiritual umbilical cord. It survives all the troubles and turmoil in life that children can bring. Nothing can break through that cord. Nothing, that is, except a child's untimely death.

Now, I am trying to understand all of this in my finite, male mind, and frankly, I can't. I can't begin to understand a mother's keen sense of suffering when a child dies. I am left only to my inadequate imagination of her emptiness within. I caught glimpses of this suffering watching Debby sob and repeatedly cry out, "I can't protect him

anymore! I can't comfort him anymore. I can't treat his hurts anymore!"

Truly, a big part of a mother dies when her child dies. I share these thoughts with grieving family members and friends so there can be some sort of understanding. Mother's Day will never be the same. If it is a first time after the passing of a child, anxiety and grief will be severe, frequent and intense. Expect those feelings, but they will also pass. Here are some suggestions, which come from grief counselors and experienced grieving parents. Keep the level of anxiety and anticipation low. Let the grieving mother set the tone of the day. Let it be her day to observe in her fashion.

Have a plan for the day. It can be the simplest of plans, and it should be. Elaborate plans can cause more grief, not less. Communicate the family plans with all family members and friends. Be assertive. Stick to those plans. If a quiet day is needed, do it. If many friends and family are the answer, do it. Words can hurt or heal. So choose the words of encouragement wisely. Resolve to be a good listener that day. Remember that the best gift to give a grieving mother can't be bought. It is priceless. It can't be wrapped. It is too immense. That gift is you. Now I close with something for all you precious, compassionate mothers. Please be good to yourselves, you have surely earned it.

*Aaron Pueschel  
TCF Visalia CA*

### 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.*

Denise and Randy Schofield, whose beloved son, **Michael**, Born 9/06; Died 12/13; 1 year  
Linda Welbes, whose beloved son, **Joseph**, Born 5/03; Died 2/08; 34 years

Say Their Name

Time goes on. I don't know that I believe the "time heals" idea, but I do know now that time just keeps going and drags you along with it. Into the future you never imagined. Into a life without your sibling or child by your side. It's painful and unbelievable, we all know that.

It's been 3 years since my brother Jason died needlessly, and I think about him every single day. I say his name. Sometimes out loud, very often in my head. Sometimes it gets stuck in my throat, and when I say it to a few dear friends it's often accompanied by a choke and tears. When my kids say "Uncle Jason" I smile because they

remember him, or at least they remember the idea of him because we talk about him.

I realized one day when a friend told me she was "...thinking about Jason..." that it feels like a gift when others say his name to me. Even if it makes me cry, I love that they say his name and think of him and are willing to talk to me about him.

Which made me think. I should let people know I think about their kids and siblings. People I met at TCF meetings and 'met' their loved one through the stories we shared there. I think of them and say their names. Often when I'm alone, out in nature, I think of them and their families: I say their names... Ginger, Ryan, Scott, Cari, Weston, Toni, Stephanie Catherine, Cody Orion, Julie, Mark, Tyler,

Isabella, Gretchen, Rick, Will, Brad, Sarah, Josh, Tracey, Brandon, Brian... so many, too many. Sometimes out loud. Sometimes in my head.

They are not forgotten. I say their names.

*Kara Myers, Jeffco TCF sister of Jason Lhotka*

Thoughts of My Brother

Another holiday without you  
 Another wedding without you  
 Another birthday without you  
 Another graduation without you  
 Another day without you.  
 I miss your goofy laugh  
 I miss your temper tantrums  
 I miss your bugging me for money  
 I miss your punches in the arm  
 But most of all I miss you.  
 So I will remember  
 Our good and bad times  
 And share them with others  
 So that I can keep you Alive in my heart.

*DeAnn Kouse  
 Louisville, KY*

A Special Note To All Siblings:

An emotional and sentimental day is Mother's Day. It can be a very lonely day for moms, even if there are other children in the family. Lonely because that one child is not here to wish her "Happy Mother's Day".

So if your Mom is not responding as you would like her to on that day, give her a big hug and tell her you love her. Be gentle with her.

Together both of you can remember the good times, and make this Mother's Day one you both will remember for a long time.

*TCF, Marysville, WA*



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](http://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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:**

**Ann Arbor:** Mike Fedel: [MikeFedela2@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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

PLEASE REMEMBER  
 Sibings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least 16 years old.

# Livonia Chapter Page

**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 is on back page.

- ♥ Mary & Mike Hartnett in Memory of: Michael : Happy Heavenly Birthday Bud. We love you and miss you! Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn
- ♥ Sheryl Trupiano in Memory of: Shane: Shane, it is a little over 14 years and I long to hold you again. You're my Shaner Forever and Always. Love & Miss You Mom
- ♥ Linda Welbes in Memory of : Joseph: You are my gift and my biggest blessing. Always in my heart. I died the day you past;
- ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens in Memory of: Justin: Wishing our son Justin a very "Heavenly Birthday!" Love you to the moon & back always! Always in our hearts!
- ♥ Susan Steinberg in Memory of: Shannon: Shannon it is 7 years now and how can we still be without you? Forever the Love & Beauty in our lives. Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris & Ajax
- ♥ Joseph & Laura Myers in Memory of : Paul: We love and miss you so!
- ♥ Valerie Weatherly in Memory of : Kelli: Our "Special K" God knows how much we miss you! Mom & Brother Teddy
- ♥ Elizabeth Golden in Memory of : Andrew: Happy Birthday Dear Andrew. We miss you! Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff & Blair
- ♥ Faye & John Heller in Memory of John Desmond Heller II: Happy Heavenly Birthday Johnny! We love and miss you every single day. Love Mom, Dad & Kim
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann in Memory of: Ryfro: On his Angel Day 5/10; in Memory of: Bryan "Bryfro" Soup on his Birthday 5/15; in Memory of: Our Sons & Ryan "Ryfro", Tom Jr., Bryan. "Bryfro" Soup is considered a Son to our family, Mark "Sparky" Abbott, Joe Coffey, Jim "Jimmy Vick" M

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Let Us Celebrate Their Births



Our Livonia chapter is making a new name list of our children, grandchildren and siblings that will be read at the Candle Lighting ceremony held in Kellogg Park each December.

This list has become too large to read with over 1000 names since it has not been updated in several years. Even if your names have been on the list for years, this is a brand new list and you will need to contact us by either email or phone, if you want to be included. If you would like your child, grandchild or sibling name

read this year (2022) at the Candle Lighting, please email your name, your phone # and the name you want read to: [stevenscd57@gmail.com](mailto:stevenscd57@gmail.com) or you may call our TCF number 734-778-0800 with

the name/s. Please submit your names by September 30th, 2022.

Thank you all for understanding.

We Need Not Walk Alone, We Are the Compassionate Friends.

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

## ***May 2022***

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,  
*please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel*

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### ***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



### **May Chapter Craft Day**

Our May Craft day will be on May 7th, at the Plymouth District Library - 223 S. Main Street from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. We will be decorating an 8" star, using our child, grandchild, or siblings pictures. You will need to bring photos on photo paper to fit 8" stars. All other supplies will be provided in the \$5.00 cost. There will be a sign up sheet at the May chapter meeting and samples for you to look at. Any questions call or text Kathy at: (734) 306-3930.