

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**November 2017**  
**Volume 29, Number 11**

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:

**NEXT MEETING -November 2-**  
**First Time table, Sibling Table, Topic**  
**Tables:What is something you can**  
**do to make Thanksgiving a day of**  
**gratitude for your child**  
**November 18 - Craft Day - see page 8**  
**November 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@gmail.com.

**Dec. 10 - 7 pm - Annual Candle**  
**Lighting - see page 7**

### First Thanksgiving

The thought of being thankful  
fills my heart with dread.  
They'll all be feigning gladness,  
not a word about her said.  
These heavy shrouds of blackness  
enveloping my soul,  
pervasive, throat-catching,  
writhe in me, and coil.  
I must, I must acknowledge,  
just express her name,  
so all sitting at the table,  
know I'm thankful that she came.  
Though she's gone from us forever  
and we mourn to see her face,  
not one minute of her living,  
would her death ever replace.  
So I stop the cheerful gathering,  
though my voice quivers, quakes,  
make a toast to all her living.  
That small tribute's all it takes.  
*Genesee Bourdeau Gentry*  
*from Stars in the Deepest Night -*  
*After the Death of a Child*

### Recipe for Recovery

As many of us go about preparing  
our Holiday dinners, don't we wish  
we had a "Recipe for Recovery?"  
"Just add a cup of boiling water, stir  
well and drink," and our grieving  
would be over. Our society seems to  
crave "instant answers," but bereave-  
ment is a long process, and there are  
no easy solutions. Yet, I couldn't help

imagining what I would put in my  
own "Recipe for Recovery,"

Start with one cup of the **MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS**- all those dear friends who did not turn away from me when they heard of Steve's suicide; but helped in many practical, caring ways to make the first months easier.

Add several **GOOD EGGS** - helping professionals like my minister, the counselor who suggested TCF and the young funeral director couple who organized the TCF Chapter I attended in New York.

Throw in a few heaping tablespoons of **READING MATERIALS**- Books and pamphlets from the TCF Library that started my thoughts going in a positive direction.

Add **THE SALT OF THE EARTH**- wonderful new friends I met through TCF and other support groups.

Maybe we should call them **THE CREAM OF THE CROP**, because eventually they rise to the top.

Sprinkle liberally with **TEARS** - because it's okay to cry and generously with **LAUGHTER**- because we can learn to smile again.

Bake in a warm oven of **TENDER LOVING CARE**. Be sure to make enough to share with others and freeze some for later.

That's my recipe - what's yours?  
-Cynthia Kelley, TCF/Cincinnati, OH

# **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 those who subscribe to the newsletter.*



## ***Let Us Celebrate Their Births***

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*Instead of thinking I need to get back to the old "normal,"  
perhaps I need to embrace how I am changed forever by the death of my loved one.  
To do this I have to acknowledge the reality of the death and be willing to connect to the deepest parts of myself.  
That's when grief becomes a growth process : I am new; I am changed; I am reborn.  
Alan D. Wolfelt*

## A Permanent Fixture Like the Pain in your Chest

Who knows why it took me three years, eight months, and 12 days to remove the remains of a balloon from the mantle and picture frame? "Grief has its own schedule."

It was such a small thing. A foolish thing. The remains of an old navy blue balloon with white polka dots on it. For anyone who wants to know what happens to an inflated balloon after three-plus years: it shrinks, ever so gradually. The air that was forced into it leaks out, bit by bit. Within a few weeks, it begins to resemble a "before" picture for a facelift ad. After several months have passed, it's beyond restoration. Not even a Hollywood lift-and-tuck wizard could rejuvenate this shriveled prune. And if the prune happens to be attached to several long silk ribbons, the overall effect is even more wretched. So wretched, in fact that you think about getting rid of it, but can't. It's not the right time yet.

Next, the rubber begins to disintegrate, although it's not clear exactly when this happens. (A person who dusted the living room mantle with greater frequency could be more precise.) If the rubber happens to be in contact with something, say a picture frame, it adheres. Permanently. From a distance, it might be an artistic paint spatter. Up close, it looks like the cat dined on something interesting and then had second thoughts. As for the part that isn't pasted in the picture frame - it ends up stuck to the mantle, a small lump of withered rubber. Her aunt saw her blow up the balloon. I wish I had. She sat, so her aunt told me, on the kitchen floor with her legs splayed out in front of her, a little sweaty and flushed from her bike ride home, blowing it up and then attaching it to a bottle of wine with long silk ribbons.

It was the middle of August. In my mind, she sits on the kitchen floor, her long hair falling across her face as she gets the ribbons just right, demon-

strating her gift for making everyday objects look beautiful.

She must have been wearing one of her hideous pairs of baggy, khaki shorts. A white T-shirt, probably, with a slightly quirky environmental message. Boots, sandals. An assortment of silver rings. I saw her a few minutes later when she gave the bottle of wine to her father and me for our anniversary, but I can't really remember what she was wearing.

The bottle of wine sits in a little cupboard, gathering dust. She died in an accident three days after she gave it to us. We have never been able to think of a reason to open it. The balloon, well, it ended up draped over a framed picture on the mantle.

And there it stayed for three years, eight months, and 12 days.

During sporadic cleaning gestures toward the mantle, I would touch it; mark its progress toward demise. Somehow, that which she had held in her hands became sacred. Her breath remaining in this little sac of rubber. Maybe a year after she died, an acquaintance wondered if I knew about the strange substance pasted on the picture frame and mantle. Yes, I knew. Her friends, noticing the clutter of boxes, clothing, old stuffed animals, papers and books still in her bedroom gently suggested that I might like some help, disposing of these things. No. I wouldn't. Another year passed, and another.

The navy-blue-and-white blob was a permanent fixture. A bit like the pain in your throat and chest, just there, part of our lives. It no longer looked like a balloon, but we knew what it was.

And then, one day, I picked up the picture frame and examined it closely. An exploratory scratch with one of my fingernails - no, old rubber doesn't come off. I inspected the lump on the mantle. Yes, it could be removed, although a small stain would always mark the spot. It took another week, and then it was time. In a flurry of activity the picture was removed, the frame thrown out, a new one pur-

chased and the mantle cleaned. It didn't feel right or wrong. Just sort of matter-of-fact. The idea of saving a scrap of the decayed rubber flitted through my mind and was met with "and what are you planning to do with it?"

I have no idea why it took three years, eight months, and 12 days for the right moment. I don't know why her green knapsack still sits on the floor of her bedroom packed with the same items as the day the police returned it to us. And I don't need to know why. That's just the way it is. Maybe the knapsack will always sit there. Or perhaps another right moment will come, and I will recognize it.

Grief experts like to talk about process and stages - a movement toward some resolution. In other words, you're supposed to be going someplace. Interesting theory, but irrelevant when you're on the inside looking out. All you can manage is to live from moment to moment, to endure, and, most of all, to trust your instincts. There's no road map that tells you where you're supposed to be going, or how long the journey might take. You have to discover the path for yourself. If it takes a lifetime, so be it.

The rubber blob is gone, and we don't miss it. But the little girl, and then young woman, with the long, honey-colored hair, still inhabits our house and our memories. Jumping off the dock at the cottage, her tiny body encased in a life jacket, plus two ski belts for insurance. Turning cartwheels across the living room. Throwing open the front door so hard it bounces off the radiator, and shouting, "I have just had the worst day of my life!" Studying at the dining-room table, a cup of herbal tea and her cat beside her for comfort. Sitting on the kitchen floor, attaching a navy-blue-and white balloon to a bottle of wine with long silk ribbons.

*Sylvia Pegis Santin, Toronto, ON Canada*

## Look A Like

Have you ever walked down the street, driven by in your car or casu-

ally scanned a crowd, finding to your stunned realization, a child that looks like the one you have lost? I think we all have, and as one who works in summer camps, I find it happens to me rather often. One boy of fourteen in particular struck me this year. I was nearly constantly captured by his image...until I wrote about this lad who so closely resembles Olin.

*I'm sure you are unaware, but you look like him.*

*Your build, hair, eyes, height are much like his.*

*Even your changing voice*

*Echoes his sound and tone.*

*You can't know how you tempt me,*

*You wouldn't understand if I forgot  
and laid my arm across your shoulders,*

*Or embraced you and called you Son.*

*When I look into your eyes, Though  
quickly, and skim a glance across your face,*

*I see you are not he.*

*But at a distance and from the back,  
or as you stride with that familiar gait,  
I see him and forget that you are you.*

*You cannot know the joy you inspire or  
the pain you inflict*

*Just by looking as you do.*

*Forgive me if sometimes I avoid you.*

*Make allowances if occasionally I  
seem to stare.*

*You are your own flesh*

*And belong only to yourself.*

*But sometimes, when I overflow with  
sorrow and find you near*

*I discard reality and turn you to a  
ghost. It is a delusion of the moment,*

*Unfair, I know, to you*

*But the truth is bitter*

*And hurts me too.*

*I long for the boy I see in you*

*Don Hackett*

*TCF – Hingham, MA*

## Reaching Out

It has been over eight years since Dylan has passed away. Yet, each time I encounter a newly bereaved parent, I am filled with the memories of those first days, weeks, months. This past week, my colleague and his

wife were anticipating the birth of their first born. Thursday morning I received the news that their son died during delivery. It felt like someone had punched me in the stomach. I felt the air go from my lungs. I wanted to run right up to whatever hospital they were at and hug them tightly. I wanted to cry with them. Hearing their news brought me back to a time eight years prior. It brought me back to our return home from the hospital with an empty car seat. To the funeral home to pick out the casket, flowers, and submit an obituary. To a vacant nursery that would eventually collect dust and other random deposits. To a postpartum body and no baby. To trying to live in a world that had not stopped. I recalled, so vividly, how much I yearned to be a mother, how I was a mother but there was no baby. How I drank to console and numb the pain. How I desperately tried to get pregnant to "fill the void." How I cried and screamed and cried some more, trying to release the pain and the anger; how I eventually did become pregnant and all the new terrors that having a baby again gave me. When I came home from work that evening, it felt as if my soul had been crying all day. And really, it had. Once the kids were in bed and sleeping, I plucked our sleeping two year-old from his crib and carried him to bed with me. I rubbed his face and arms and back and cried, reliving so much pain that this family was just beginning to feel, to absorb, to recognize.

This isn't unusual for me to feel this when meeting or hearing of the newly bereaved. So why do I actively reach out those newcomers? Why do I go to Compassionate Friends every month? Why do I edit the newsletter, which each time is soul draining as articles spark the emotions and memories? I do it because I feel it's necessary to help these parents. The journey is so hard, too hard to do alone. I believe it's helpful for them to have someone to listen to the same story over and over and over again. To be able to sit

in silence when words fail. To be able to say to other parents, "You aren't going crazy!" To give them hope that there is life after death, that one can live after the death of their child. I have to do it for them.

Here's the interesting part. It helps me. Each time I recall or share the pain of losing Dylan, it's a little less painful, a little clearer. I become a bit wiser. It helps me go on with the courage to love without fear. And it reminds me, this little boy did much to exist in this world. His 12 days of life wasn't a foggy dream. But it wasn't nearly long enough.

*Joleen Krings*

*In Memory of my son Dylan,  
TCF Green Bay, WI*

## No Rules, No Judgment, Just Love and Support

On that day, April 18, 2016, my sister, who is a mother herself, had to tell me that my son didn't make it.

I dropped to my knees and screamed, "NO! It can't be, we just talked, and I had just seen him yesterday.", The rest of that afternoon was a big blur to me.

All I remember is my sister directing me to the back to find 'Kenndal (my son's finace) alongside of Nick. That day was the beginning of the worst day of my life. My heart was broken, I was never going to be the same again. That day I lost my son to an unexpected heart condition - not only did I lose my son, but my best friend too. These past months have been very difficult for me, Kenndal, my daughter, my family and friends.

I have met a great bunch of people during this time of grieving through Compassionate Friends, a support group I discovered. One of the ladies who also lost a child texted me to tell me that I was in her thoughts and prayers. She said to me "I know that this coming month will be especially hard, please know I'm here to help support you in any way that I can, love you"! I texted her back and said thank you, I explained to her that I feel

numb, I am so lost and heartbroken, I can't believe it is almost a year it feels just like yesterday . I feel like I have been frozen back in time and keep re-living that horrible day over and over. A mother should never have to bury her child.

She texted me this:

*"I understand, really I do. These anniversaries are horrific ... And the anxiety leading up to them are almost worse. It seems like yesterday. Can't believe that life has gone on, when yours has completely stopped. You're numb, that's your body's way of defending itself. You're not crazy, you are grieving a loss that no mother nor parent should ever have to bare, and there are no rules, my friend. You do what you have to do to survive and get through each hour. Reach out if you need to or be alone if you need to. There are NO RULES, NO JUDGEMENT just love and support.*

**No Rules, No Judgment  
just Love and Support**

**Laura Ramirez**

**TCF, Livonia, MI**

**(Laura joined with a church this past**

**summer to travel to assist with a medical mission. As she said. "I will be going on this mission to reach out to ones in desperate need, I need to do this, I need to so I can give, so I can feel needed, and to make a difference. But in all, I truly believe I will be the one getting the help."**

### Reconciling a Loss

**Reconciling a Loss** does not mean: Settling for minimal function, a return to the prior condition, unchanged forgetting our love one who is gone, pretending it never happened in order to make onlookers more comfortable, digging in our heels and refusing to ever let go of our pain, using grief as an excuse for unacceptable behavior.

**Reconciling a Loss** can mean:

An ability to remember love without pain, or with minimal pain, a new relationship with the loved one who died, a changed outlook, a deeper understanding of life and its transitions, a more compassionate and understanding outreach to others, a new set of priorities and commitments, a wider, more tolerant circle to live in, a greater

desire to leave the world better than we found it.

Andrea Gambill

*What Does Getting Over It Mean?*



Livonia Chapter Annual  
Candle Lighting-

Where - Kellogg Park  
Plymouth, Michigan

When - December 10 - 7 PM

### 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.*

Valerie and Jim Gibson, whose beloved daughter, **Lisa**, Born 7/5; Died 7/8; 33 years

Charles and Nita Guy, whose beloved daughter, **C.J.**, Born 3/17; Died 8/16, 24 years

Jane Haley, whose beloved son, **Michael**, Born 7/23; Died 7/17; 30 years

Meaghan Ringwelskii whose beloved son, **Evan**, Born 6/11; Died 5/27; 15 years

**A Love Gift** is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form on back page.

- ♥ Elizabeth Golen "In memory of Andrew Golen. It will be one year on 11/05. We love and miss you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff & Blair"
- ♥ Carol & Glenn Mead "In memory of Bobby Mead. Much loved, much missed, forever in our hearts. Happy 34th birthday Bobby. Love, Mom, Dad, Katie & DJ"
- ♥ Lee & Rhonda Temple "In memory of our beautiful daughter Alyssa! Happy Birthday in heaven pee wee! You are always missed and forever loved. Love, Mom, Dad, Justin and Brandon"

Special Thank You to Pat & Janet O'Donnell for their donation from a Golf Fundraiser. In special memory of Brian and Thomas O'Donnell and all the children who died too soon.

# SIBS

## Grief is Lonely

Grief is lonely. When my sister died two years ago, everyone knew about it and talked about it. Everyone was in shock - but now, two years later, the anniversary of her death came and went without even a card in the mail. No one at work remembered the day. No one called to say, "I am thinking of you." No one asked, "How are you feeling?" My family has stayed in close contact and we talk about Susan all the time. But when it comes to grieving over Susan, everyone grieves alone. No one knows how I feel about my little sister and how it hurts me so deeply to know she is not here. Everything else in life can be shared with

someone else, but not grieving. No one can fully understand the pain because everyone's pain is different. When the pain is the greatest, the loneliness is the greatest too. I never thought I could feel this much pain and still survive. I am alone in my grief. There is no one else here with me.

Susan was born when I was almost 11. She died by suicide when she was 16. The baby of the family, the youngest of four kids; our hearts are broken forever.

*Cherie Bagadiong,  
TCF/St. Mary's County*

## In Loving Memory of Joel

I sometimes sit and wonder how  
Life can go on without you now  
Somehow this month it will be five  
years

Yet many nights I still shed tears  
Siblings we were that much is true  
But friends as well, that's hard to do  
Sometimes your missed, more now  
than ever

The shock's worn off, the pain forever  
Although for now, our journeys apart  
Forever in my mind, my soul, my  
heart.

*Robyn Mather*

## It's the Music That Bonds the Soul

The room you once lived in  
Doesn't look the same.  
The people who used to call you  
Never mention your name.

The car you used to drive  
They may not make them anymore.  
And all the things you once treasured  
Are boxed beyond the closet doors.

The clothes you set the trends by  
Are surely out of date.  
The people you owed money to  
Have wiped away the slate.

Things have changed and changed  
again  
Since you went away.  
But some things have remained the  
same  
Each and everyday.

Like this aching in my heart  
A scar that just won't heal.  
On the way a special song  
Can change the way I feel.

Brother, you must know that the  
music  
Bonds us and will keep us close  
Because secretly I know deep in my  
heart  
It's the music you miss the most.

So let the world keep on turning  
And time can take its toll.  
For as long as the music keeps  
playing  
You'll be alive and dancing in my  
soul.

*Stacie Gilliam*

## 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](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:** PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; Phone: (630) 990-0010; Toll Free: (877)969-1101; Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://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  
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Gaylord, MI 49735

November 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

November Craft Day

November 18th will be our Craft Day and we will be meeting at St. Timothy's from 10 am until 1 pm. We will be completing the ornaments for our TCF Memory Trees that will be displayed in Kellogg Park in Plymouth, MI. Please bring extra scissors if you can. After the ornaments are completed anyone who wants to travel to Plymouth to decorate the trees are welcome. Please bring warm clothes with you as we never know what the weather will be. Last year it was raining/sleeting and we all froze while we decorated. Brrrr ... Any questions contact Gail at [angel4gail2016@gmail.com](mailto:angel4gail2016@gmail.com)