

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**October 2015**  
**Volume 27, Number 10**

**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

### **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 -October 1-**  
Newcomer table, sibling table, topic  
table: In the article *A Mother's Hope*,  
have you been able to reach point of  
hope? How did you get there?

October 20 -TCF Dinner-sign up at  
meeting or call Kathy 734-306-3930  
or katjrambo@wowway.com

October 17 - Craft Day - see page 8

### ***Halloween and Beyond***

I was preparing to go out to purchase candy for the "great pumpkin day," when I thought of other upcoming holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, and New Year's Day. These days can threaten us bereaved families so much. This year marks the fifth holiday season since my son Douglas' death and I still have a fleeting desire to run and hide. Although last season was not as terrible as the one before, I know I'll shed tears again this year during some lonely and sad moments. These are very private moments of grief for me now.

For those of you who do not attend support meetings, our group's newsletter may be the only link you have to other bereaved parents. Please take time for yourself during these holidays. Take time to cry and to be alone. Refrain from taking on assignments from others who cannot know your exhaustion. Ask for what you need. I know it is tough to tell someone else that you hurt and need something from him or her. But you need not pretend to be okay when, in fact, you are not. An honest request will usually be met with at least some sort of understanding and helpfulness.

Healing is a slow process requiring much work. You know those who say that time will heal all wounds have never experienced great loss. What they do not know...and cannot know... is that grief work is not just the passage

of time, but the pain, the suffering and the struggle to reclaim a full life which occurs over time. Time is not the healer; it is your own effort, your own strength, and your own determination that makes healing possible. Take all the time you need to heal your spirit and your will to live again; Be good to yourself. Remember the healing is possible through your effort and determination, not simply the passage of time.

*Shirley Corrigan*  
*BP/USA of North Texas*

### ***This House and I***

I think this house and I shall grow old together and fall down around one another.

How can I paint the walls when his breath has coated them?  
How can I wash the door frames when the smudges of his fingerprints surely are still there?  
How can I patch the hole I kicked in the wall in the weeks after he died?  
How can I clean the carpets that still hold billions of his skin cells, his DNA?  
How can I throw out the old, broken chair that he sat and slept in?  
How can I clear the air that sometimes still carries his scent?  
How can I ever fix the broken hearts of his mother, his sisters and I?  
How long must I wait?

*Jack McPeck*  
*TCF of Spokane, WA*

# **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 only available though internet or mailed version.**



***Let Us Celebrate Their Births***

**Names only available through internet or mailed version.**

## **Through a Pinhole**

I think I was in the first grade. The buzz around school was the upcoming solar eclipse. The girl who sat next to me stated with confidence, "The sun is going to turn black and disappear." This thought filled me with dread. "Well, it might disappear for just a little bit," the girl quipped, "and then it will turn cold and we'll all die like the dinosaurs!" Then we both started laughing. Our teacher told us to take out our milk cartons and make our special eclipse camera.

I had washed my milk carton out at home, cut the top off, and dried the inside so it that it magically could be turned into a camera with which to watch the solar eclipse. "You can't look at the eclipse," my classmates chimed in excitedly. "Your eyes will burn up and you will go blind." So we took our milk carton and covered the open top with tin foil and taped it down. We cut a flap into the side of the carton, pulled it back and then used a straight pin to punch a hole in the foil cover. Immediately you could see the small concentrated beam of light reflecting through the pinhole onto the bottom of the carton. It wasn't the whole sun, but it was all we needed to see and experience the eclipse. Once the sun disappeared, so would our little pinhole of light. This is how you watched an eclipse in 1963, through the tiny lens of a homemade pinhole camera.

In the days after Clarke's death, this too is how I began my contest of survival. Each hour became pinpoints of light on which to focus. I couldn't look at the entire sun or the entire impact of Clarke's death. I had to take it one pinpoint at a time, focusing on that pinpoint of light long enough to get to the next hour and then the next. I only needed to see just beyond this thought, just beyond this point.

There was no denying the truth of my circumstance. My son was killed suddenly in an auto accident, my only child. Absorbing the reality of this could only happen in measured doses. My shock armor would not allow me

to see beyond the next hour.

I was certain of my first pinpoint, my first mindset in dealing with this tragedy: I could not allow the moment of Clarke's death to become my focus. Not when the moments of his life were so incredibly rich and many. Not when his memory couldn't help but cause a smile. At the time, I couldn't know that thinking this way would be the beginning steps of my recovery. I didn't know the journey had just begun.

*Excerpted from ...Keeping Clarke  
Stephanie Benbenek*

## **A Mother's Hope**

When our son died, I hoped it was a mistake. It was not. I hoped it was a dream. It was not. Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinner time with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook, I did not shop for food, I did not eat. I hoped he would come back. He did not. I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not. I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives. I hoped for acceptance. I found none. I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not. How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?

I hoped for peace. I had none. I hoped for sleep. I had none. I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of my control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew our life would never be the same again. I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not. I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not. I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not. I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving

children that I knew they deserved. I could not. I knew how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give. I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead. I hoped the feelings that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying. At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, "How long will I feel like this?" He did not.

I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at my second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter in law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have. When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again. But there is joy. When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. But I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I

do not cry as often. So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Oh, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium.

I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him will never change.

My hope as a Mother is that we all will find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.

*Betty Lineberger*

*BP/USA of Marion County FL*

## **Why Do I Come to Bereaved Parent Meetings?**

A family member recently asked me why I continue to come to Bereaved Parents meetings? She said, "After all, it's been 5 years since your son died. Don't you find it depressing to go to those meetings?" I stopped and

thought for just a minute...it is incredibly sad to hear the stories of loss and pain, but it does not depress me. I ache for those families whose loss is more recent, where the pain is a heart savagely torn into raw pieces and where the pain seems relentless and like it will last forever. But had I not had the support of this group, I wonder if I would have made it, and kept my sanity, through the past 5 years. I know for certain that my grief journey, as hard as it has been, was made easier, and my burden lighter, because it was shared by those who truly understood my loss and who constantly reassured me that I was not losing my mind...I was just grieving.

I have personally been blessed by a supportive family and by loyal friends at church and at work who, even after 5 years, send me cards or flowers or call or e-mail to see how I am doing. And I am grateful for their support. But somehow there is nothing quite like the hug of another bereaved parent and the tears that mingle with mine as we grieve together the death of our own child and our friend's child. I can't explain it. I can only be grateful to have experienced this amazing support that has made this unending grief journey bearable.

I can share laughter and tears at the same time with parents who understand the guilt that accompanies those first moments of laughter. It seems

like a betrayal of our children...even though we know that they would want us to go on and they would not want us to be miserable. A friend who was recently widowed told me just today that she was so sorry that I had the grief experience to be able to comfort her and yet she was inexplicably comforted by the fact that she was not alone in her grief...that there were others who understood even a portion of what she was feeling. I know what she means. I felt that way the first time I came to a Bereaved Parents meeting and every time I have come since then. I would not have chosen the pain of this loss and yet I would not want those whose children have recently died to not have the loving support that others gave to me when I thought I could not stand another day, another minute of the pain of our loss.

And so we continue to come monthly...to meet, to hug, to cry, to laugh to listen and to try to understand another's story. And we come to love each other's children that we never got to meet. Their faces become almost as familiar as our own children's countenance and so incredibly dear because they were so special to our friends. In sharing our children's lives and their deaths, they continue to live on through our stories and our pictures and we are comforted as we grieve together.

*Charlotte Miller*

A Love Gift is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. The money from Love Gifts is the main source of income for the Livonia Chapter, and allows the chapter to send out newsletters, rent meeting space, and reach out to those newly bereaved. See new Love Gift form on back page.

PLEASE FORWARD LOVE GIFTS TO: THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS,  
C/O: RHONDA TEMPLE, 25164 Hanover St., Dearborn Heights, MI 48125

- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "Happy Birthday Ryan "Ryfro" 10/26. We love you & Miss you!"
- ♥ Tom & Connie McCann "In memory of our sons, Ryan "Ryfro", Tom Jr. & Bryan "Bryfro" Soupis considered a son to our family".
- ♥ Roger & Sally Cassidy "Happy Birthday Danny. We love you & miss you. Mom, Dad, Matt & Mike"
- ♥ Dan & Mary Beth Myska "In memory of Andrew (Drew) Myska. On your 29th Birthday, God Bless. Love, Dad, Mom, Matt, Molly & Bryanna..missed everyday"
- ♥ Sandra Powell "In memory of Chad"
- ♥ Matt & Cindy Stevens "Love you Justin miss you so very much"
- ♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett "In memory of Michael Anthony. It is hard to believe you have been gone a year already. We love & miss you so much bud! Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn"
- ♥ Scott and Sue Reynolds in loving memory of Rachael "It's hard to believe you've been in the arms of our Heavenly Father for one year. You are loved and missed so much by all your family and friends. Love, Mom, Dad, Becca, Jacqlyn, DiDi and Twinkie.

LOVE GIFTS



# **SIBS**

## **Smile**

By definition, grief is deep sorrow especially caused by someone's death. To me, grief is a lifelong suffering that can slowly deplete but never goes away, a pain that is so strong, yet so beautiful, as our love for them shines through the broken parts.

It's every emotion you can think of, felt for the rest of your days on this earth.

It hurts and it hurts.

But remember, it could be worse.

You ask how this is when you feel such remorse. Well, you could look back and

not feel grateful about one memory.

They say when you grieve so much for someone, it means you had true happiness in your life.

So grief is bittersweet.

And nothing I say will make it all okay.

I know it's easier to wallow in the pain

than keep it small and contained, But we talk with others who share our pain and are in that club we never wanted to join.

I know sometimes it's easier to destroy ourselves than it is to heal ourselves.

But when you start to feel the guilt and when your world starts to tilt, as hard as it may be, think of a good memory.

It may make you cry, it may make you ask why, it may make that heaviness on your chest feel heavier, But remember to breathe and remember to smile Your loved one watches you from above, feeling your pain and your unconditional love. But we owe it to them to not always be so sad.

We owe it to them to look back on positive memories we had. But every so often, subside the tears, and once in a while,

look up, and give them a smile.

*Chelsey McHale*

## **A Tribute to my Sister Lori Lee Smith I Saw You**

I saw you today in the morning dew

As brilliant as a sea of shimmering diamonds

I shared the most amazing sunrise with you today

A million shades of red so random in their perfection

I heard you today in the laugh of my children

An enchanting melody a thousand angels strong

I walked with you today and we talked about everything

. . . and nothing all at once

I saw you today in the changing of the leaves

The colors of your life, the close of one season

And the ushering in of another

I sat beside a stream with you today

The peaceful flow, steady and constant

I saw you today . . . and you were perfect

And rest assured . . . I shall see you again

*Avery Smith*

*TCF Ada Area Chapter*

### **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



## Change of Seasons

There is an oft-quoted Bible passage that has permeated mainstream culture: "To every thing there is season, a time to grieve..." When you are in the season of your grief, you may notice that nature's change of seasons may affect you. As you experience the change from winter to spring, spring to summer, summer to fall and fall back to winter, not only does the temperature and landscape change, but so, too, does your grief.

The first year after you have experienced the death of a loved one, you may mark time by remembering the significant and even the insignificant events of your life from the previous year. You may catch yourself thinking, "Last year at this time, we were..." Your memories of those seasons of life include your loved one and you may be painfully aware that when the season comes again, you will have lived a whole year without him or her. This reality confirms what you may already have known the physical presence of your loved one is lost forever, just like the last hint of snow that melts into the ground. And with that realization comes a new sense of how time and the seasons pass.

The subtle changes that signal the approach of a new season observed by others, may be overshadowed by the grief that looms over each passing day. And then, before you know it, time has continued to tick off minutes, hours, days, weeks and months, and you are confronted with a new season that brings with it more change, stress, and grief. Instead of looking forward to the change of seasons, you may dread what that brings without your loved one.

With each new time of year, you may find that your mood does not fit the season. As the weather turns colder and forces you indoors, you may feel even more alone and isolated in your grief. The shorter days amplify the darkness you may feel in your soul. As spring arrives, you may feel like you are in the winter of your grief, only to be surrounded by new growth, new

beginnings and people who talk about things like hope and anticipation of warmer weather. Summer months are often spent doing family and outdoor activities that may heighten your sense of loss. The days full of despair may be longer than you would like them to be. It may be a beautiful day, but you may feel stone cold inside. As the leaves fall from the trees in the fall and the growing season ends, you are reminded of the dullness and drabness of your life. Your grief may be in its fallow time, where everyday looks pretty much the same and you have very little hope that you will ever be happy again.

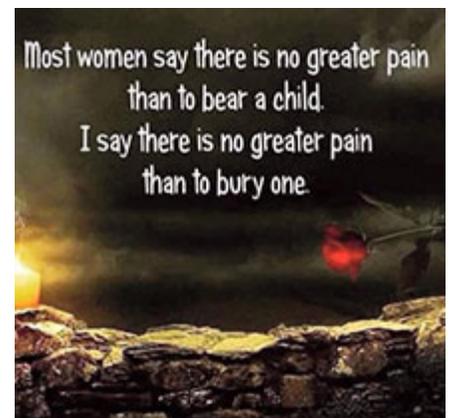
When you do get in touch with the beauty of the season, you may regret that your loved one isn't with you to share it. That's why it is so important to surround yourself with the beauty of each new season. To remind yourself that while you may be in the depths of your grief, you are surrounded by life. Surround yourself with living things in order to reassure yourself that just as the seasons change, so, too, will your grief. When you go outdoors, breathe in fresh air deeply to replace the stagnant air of grief. Take a moment to feel the breeze against your face or the warmth of the sun against your skin. To remind yourself that you are still alive, even though your loved one has died. Plant and nurture things to reassure yourself that things will grow with care. Remind yourself often that your grief will ease if you honor it and take care of it. Indeed, you may find yourself growing in ways you could have never imagined. Find others who will hold your hope for you, when you have no hope. Others who will remind you that right where you are is where you need to be, that you will not always be in the depths of despair. Imagine yourself as the fragile little crocus, buried beneath a mountain of frozen ground. A tiny crocus that was planted with the hope that it would emerge as a beautiful flower to herald the coming or spring. The crocus is one of the noblest of flowers, because it does most of its work beneath the

ground, unobserved by others. And though there is no evidence of its hard work on the surface, it continues along its difficult path, forging ahead with courage and determination. And, then, one day, it bursts through the damp and cold ground, long before other flowers, to renew hope in life and the passage of time. Others may not see your grief or recognize the hard work that you are doing. But hold fast to this truth where you are right now in your grief is where you need to be. Even though your task is daunting and may seem senseless at times, you will one day unfurl your petals through the density of your grief toward the warmth of a new life filled with new beginnings.

If you have no seeds of hope, let someone else plant them for you. Surround yourself with others who will tend to you, encourage you and provide an environment where you can do your work. Remember, time alone will not heal your grief; it's what you do with your time that heals your grief.

## After October

*and if there be a perfect month,  
for me, it is October...  
with days and nights like laughing fauns,  
with mornings bright and sober.  
when wind will dance in sudden glee  
to do the autumn-sweeping  
or cloud and fog and wistful rain  
can move a heart to weeping.  
and in October You were born,  
four days before November...  
and four years later you were gone,  
my little son, my only son,  
I love you.  
and remember. . .  
Sascha Wagner*



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

## October 2015



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

### October Craft

This month's craft day will be on Saturday, October 17, 2015 from 10 am until 1 pm at St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church. We will be making glass picture charms that can be placed on a necklace. There will be an example of the charms at the October TCF meeting and a sign up sheet for those who wish to attend.

You will need to sign up (so we have enough supplies) and send a photo of your child to Gail at [angel4gail@tds.net](mailto:angel4gail@tds.net) by October 11th or bring your picture to the meeting on Oct. 1st. The pictures are needed ahead of the craft day as the solution used has to set up overnight before you work with the charm at craft day. Cost: \$4.00

Any questions, please email Gail or call 734-748-2514.