

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



October 2017
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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 -October 5- First
Time table, Sibling Table, Topic Tables:
Do you take time to "Stop, Look, Listen
and Sit"?**

October 28 - Craft Day - see page 8

October 17 - 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.

The Mask of Grief

As the beautiful colors of Fall surround us and the air is sweetened and chilled, we, the broken hearted parents and families of those children who left us too soon begin to find the strength and perseverance to face another season, another anniversary, another rush of memories. Perhaps Halloween brings with it visions of little candy grabbing goblins and gossamer clad fairy children. Perhaps those memories aren't available to some of us. All of us pick up our masks right around this time of year and we put them on. Our masks are different, though. When our children died, we discovered that the raw and horrible pain we were in probably showed up on our faces, in the way we stood, in the way we walked and talked. We soon discovered that, even though we had many close and loving friends and family, they were not very comfortable with watching us bleed to death from the inside out... So we constructed a mask.

Masquerade Balls and Pagan ceremonies are ancient rituals. The idea of "masking" one's identity for a short time and celebrating with wild abandon is as appealing in our society as it was in those ancient times. Unfortunately, the bereaved have a different reason for donning the mask. We

force our mask to smile when the lump in our throat and the heaviness in our chest threaten to choke us. Our eyes leak profusely, despite the waterproof mascara and pancake makeup we women keep applying...Men put on a stoic and strong façade, sometimes failing miserably and breaking down with terrible beauty.

I urge you to be gentle with your mask. Put it on thoughtfully and take it off with great care. There are safe places to leave it and one of those places is with those of us who travel this path with you.

Kerry Marston Mother Of Michael

Stop, Look, Listen and Sit

When was the last time you did nothing? Do you ever just sit anymore? Do you ever just lie on your back in new mown grass and watch the clouds dance by? Do you ever chase after butterflies, trying to give them a message to carry? Or dangle your toes in a pond or watch kids dash through a sprinkler?

Do you ever sit on a porch or patio and smell the grass, the flowers, the air? ...Do you own a rocking chair, and if so when was the last time you sat in it? Have you read a book that wasn't non-fiction...in the last ten years, months or days?

Do you have magazine subscriptions that serve only to decorate your coffee

(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 those that subscribe to the newsletter.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

table...? Is there a clock in every room, more than three calendars in your life, and how many watches do you own? ...Do you have a cell phone, a fax machine, a pager, email and call waiting?

...Do you have your sprinklers on a water timer, your lights on a night timer and your life on a Day-timer?

...How many computers are in your home? Do you write thank you notes on email, and when was the last time you actually spoke to your best friend? Do you have a checkbook and a time worn cookbook or recipe box, or has your life become electronic? Is everything in your life computerized or super-sized?

When was the last time you let a Popsicle melt inside your mouth or watched a caterpillar make its journey across the sidewalk? When was the last time you felt like soaking in a warm bath or standing in a steamy shower, mindless of the water bill? Are you on a "fixed income" both financially and emotionally?

When did you stop dreaming and start running? When did the world end and the nightmare begin? We're too busy or too tired or too hurt just to sit anymore. Sitting has become a lost art, cast aside in the modern, fast food, quick stop, email, fax message world. Sitting has become a sin.

Dogs sit. Birds sit (well, perch). Babies sit. Kids sit. Grownups don't. Even if you used to sit, you probably gave it up as you joined the bereaved world. Sitting just becomes too painful. Sitting leads to thinking. Thinking leads to remembering. Remembering leads too often to tears, and who needs those?

Sometimes, in our grief, we try to escape the hurt and the horrible by picking up the speed of our existence. We add activities, places to go and things to do, as if keeping busy will keep the hurt away. We run faster and faster, trying to outdistance the memories, the pain, the very thoughts that keep us connected to the horror of our loved one's death. If we stop

too long, if we sit, we might begin to remember and to feel again, and what is there left to feel and remember except the hurt?

...We grow anxious for no particular reason. Our pulse quickens, our hands feel moist and our breath grows short. If only we could have a heart attack and die! But even that wish eludes us, and we realize we aren't going to die, but have to figure out how to live through all of this grief. It seems safer to keep moving.

We're not the only ones running, however. The whole world seems to have speeded up lately. Is everyone running to or from something? We seem to be chasing something or hiding from something. Half the world seems to be too future-focused while the other half can't seem to let go of the past. "If only" and "what if" have become our watchwords.

We find ourselves wallowing in self-pity and despair. We become caught in the web of grief, and it seems too hard to break the threads of hurt. I sometimes think we are afraid to break those threads, because we begin to fear that hurt is the only connection we still have with our loved ones. We get too focused on what we've lost to ever inventory or treasure what we had and still have. Sometimes we don't even look at the pictures because we only experience pain & renewed grief. Sometimes we miss what is, because we only search for what was.

Grow quiet. Be still. Learn to listen. Begin to hear. Somewhere deep inside us is the one voice we never listen to. Somewhere deep within our beings are the answers to our fears, our prayers, our hopes. We spend so much time chasing each other's advice when the secret of survival lies right within ourselves. Scientists call it instinct. Some call it faith. I call it truth. Each species knows what it needs to survive; only when we can come to the quietness of ourselves, can we begin to hear.

We carry souvenirs of our hurts, each

stored away until time to add them to the next hurt, thus piling up one hurt after another, all to be carried forever in our being. Each hurt adds a new layer to our outer shell and eventually we begin to resemble a rather large onion, made up of layer upon layer of hurt. These hurts leave scars, some big, some small, but all significant in their pain. Each scar must have a place in our being, so we become a carefully organized mass of layers, each with a symbol or some "stuff" that represents it.

I'm not sure an onion is the perfect example of grief, however. After sitting for some time and thinking about all of this, I have decided that an artichoke is a better image of me. When you peel an onion down, removing every single layer (hurt), all you end up with are tears. An artichoke, on the other hand, has layers like an onion, except each leaf (layer) has a tiny pricker on the end—just like life does. But when I peel an artichoke, removing each layer, when I finally get to the end, there's a heart. And that's right!

No matter how hurried I get, no matter how fast I run or how far away from the inner me I get, there is still a heart. Whatever hurt we are carrying begins to weave itself into our very beings & eventually becomes a part of our history—a part of us. It's in the heart that hurt is stored, but that is also where hope and healing begin.

So, sometime in your journey, take the time to just sit. Turn on the answering machine and run away—to within. Dance in daisy fields; wade in icy streams and blow bubbles in the afternoon. Don't get lost in the hurry of today; don't get too busy with "stuff" to cherish what is within you. Nothing is lost. It is all there, waiting for you to retrieve it, hold it, experience it again and then, to let it place itself wherever it needs to, within you. We lost nothing, although some things seem far away.

You don't stop loving someone just because they died, and we don't forget 4

them just because we hurt a little less as healing begins to come. Finally, as we stop, look, listen and hear the knowledge comes.

Even though death comes, love never goes away. Grow quiet. Sit a spell and reconnect to the magic, the wonder and the joy that swells within. Trust me. You have it inside you. They loved us. We loved them. We still do.

Shhhhhhhhhh. Love is trying to speak.

Darcie Sims Bereavement Magazine

Grandma, I'm Right Here

You used to come to our home to stay; I loved to watch you run and play. Then you'd hide from me and I'd call out in fear and a little voice'd whisper,
"Grandma, I'm right here."

We'd go to the park or school, side by side – you played on the carousel, swing or slide. Sometimes you'd disappear and I'd call, "Justin, dear," and a little voice'd whisper,
"Grandma, I'm right here."

Off we'd go and maybe sing, "This Little Light Of Mine" or the "Achy Breaky" thing. And stop by Circle K for your thumb sucking ring. You'd hide behind the candy rack and I'd call, "Justin, dear" and a little voice'd whisper,
"Grandma, I'm right here."

We'd go on home for a bite to eat – peanut butter or hot dogs to you was a treat. Then we'd go out and play 'till we couldn't see, then come in the house to watch TV. You'd crawl on my lap; I'd whisper in your ear and a little voice'd whisper,
"Grandma, I'm right here."

I know you don't want me to be sad or shed a tear, but what I'd give once more to hear that little voice whisper,

"Grandma, I'm right here."

Grandma Rappi

My tribute to Justin

Season Of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings

Autumn is here once again as it comes every year and with the leaves my falling tears.

This time of year is the hardest of all

My heart is still breaking, once again it is fall.

Memories once so vivid are seeming to fade, my time spent with you seems some another age.

This season reminds me

of grief and of pain, but yet teaches of hope and of joy once again.

For the trees are still living beneath their gray bark,

and you my sweet child are alive in my heart!

Language of Suicide

Editor's note: Cathy, the author of this article, recently posted this on a Facebook group site.

Occasionally, I write a post regarding the language of suicide. The two-year anniversary of my stepson's suicide was on June 2nd, and it has been front and center in my thoughts. I hope that someone will read it and that that someone will also educate someone, when given the chance, to help us with the mission to change how we say it: SUICIDE: It is a death that has so many layers and agendas that it adds another whole level of difficulty to an already terrible loss. Using the word "committed" before suicide is like fingernails down a chalkboard to someone who has lost a loved one to suicide. We are trying to change the language around suicide and no longer say "committed"...and I don't care for "completed" suicide myself (we wouldn't say that someone "completed" cancer or "completed" a car accident).

The reason that "committed" is a difficult term for the survivors left

behind after a suicide has occurred is that "committed" generally indicates that what happened was a crime...from back in the Dark Ages when families were even imprisoned when a family member died of suicide (the stigma that still remains following a death by suicide is difficult enough and I pray one day there will be more understanding and education surrounding that as well).

Death by suicide occurs usually by a person who is in pain emotionally and sometimes physically that they see suicide as the only option left, to end that unbearable pain. They truly believe in their heart that they are helping their families by leaving this world...that their loved ones are better off without them. It is not the "coward's way out"...it is a pain that those of us without that level of hopelessness and darkness cannot begin to comprehend. Died "by" suicide. Died "of" suicide. Died "as a result of" suicide. Died "from" suicide. "Lost to" suicide; and even "took their own life" (because that is the reality)...but, please, never "committed". Help those who have suffered this unthinkable loss by changing the way you and others say it. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for reading this.

Cathy Seehuetter

Lessons Learned

They'll come to the door in make-up and masks,
"Trick or Treat", they will say;
I'll smile and give them candy,
on this joyous, sorrowful day.

I'll celebrate this day with joy in my heart
and a tear in my eye;
it is the day my Johnny was born
and with joy and sorrow I'll cry.

I'll remember the first time I held him,
my sweet baby boy;
I'll think about our four years together
with all of the love and joy.

I'll think about what was lost,
the future that might have been;
but then I'll remember
what we had and I'll smile once again.

The sorrow I can't deny,
the pain his death has brought;
but on this day I choose to remember
the lessons of love he taught.

Tom Wyatt

BPUSA – St. Louis, MO



Your Heart will mend, but it will
... be a different heart
... be wearing a deep and lasting scar
... be a more compassionate heart
... know life in a new and different way
Understand the Eternity of Love

Nancy Green, TCF, Livonia, MI

(Editor's note: Nancy is one of the founding members of this chapter. Over the years, she has contributed many beautiful sentiments about being a bereaved parent.)

“Thank you to all of the special parents, family and friends who attended our 1st Annual Compassionate Friends – Livonia Picnic. Also a big “Thank You” to Jan Schatz, Mike, Carol, & GERALYN Antczak, John & Sherry Temple, Judy Cappelli, Matt & Cindy Stevens, Angie & John Wolf & Gail Lafferty for all the donations and help they provided which made this event a huge success”



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.

Cecilia & Larry Coffey whose beloved son, **Joe**, Born 9/7; Died 7/26; 32 years

Danielle Dequin whose beloved baby, **Baby D**, Died 4/13

Rick & Laraine Hofmann whose beloved daughter, **Rachel**, Born 12/28; Died 7/8; 35 years

Dave & Stephannie Nagi whose beloved daughter, **Alanna**, Born 11/21; Died 7/25; 23 years

Ryan Nagi whose beloved sister, **Alanna**, Born 11/21; Died 7/25; 23 years

Gary Sarnowsky whose beloved son, **Caleb**, Born 1/17; Died 5/10; 23 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.

♥ Denise & Chris Falzon “In memory of our son Brian Falzon. Even after 24 years not a day goes by without loving thoughts of you. You were missed at Austin’s wedding.”

♥ Roger & Sally Cassidy “In memory of Danny. Happy Birthday! We miss you & think of you every day. Love, Mom, Dad, Matt & Mike”

♥ 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 by our family, Mark “Sparky” Abbott and Joe Coffey”

♥ Mike & Mary Hartnett “In memory of Michael. We miss you so much bud! Always in our hearts! Love, Mom, Dad, Katie, Dakota & Brooklyn”

♥ Cindy Stevens “In honor of our lovely children Anthony Guastella & Justin Bolin. We love you & miss you”

♥ Nancy Green - in loving memory of her son, Steven. (please see heart message above)

SIBS

A Sibling Speaks

What happens to the children when a brother or sister dies? In some ways, it is a very different experience from that which parents go through, while in other ways very much the same. Part of the reason for the difference is that the child who died has a unique relationship with each family member. Part of the reason for the similarity is that all have suffered a loss.

One of the strongest feelings I have encountered in my conversations with other siblings is that the children are much more likely to want to return to Normalcy. They want to return to school fairly quickly and go out with friends. They want their parents to stop crying, not because they don't

care but because they do care and want to see the hurt stop. Just because a child wants to go to a movie doesn't mean she isn't grieving. I think a part of what is going on here is that children are much less exposed to socially "appropriate" behavior after someone has died and may do things that do not fit into an "appropriate" role.

Another strong feeling I see is that of Guilt. As much as parents know about their children, there are some things they will never know. A child's private thoughts or an exchange between children may never come to the parent's attention. The source of a child's guilt is frequently the results of an argument, a hastily shouted "drop dead" or a similar, fleeting thought. These come back to haunt children as though that statement had something to do with the death.

There are a few more concerns that may develop. One is how to take over for the dead child. What I mean are things like the household chores that were always done by (him or her) but now have to be done by someone else. Related to this is a child who always shared a particular activity simply because the sibling did it too. After the death of a child, the child may feel compelled to continue the activity because to give it up would take away a reminder of the sibling.

Another concern is that whatever happened to that brother or sister may happen to the child, too. This is particularly acute if the sibling who died was older. As the child approaches the age what the sibling died, a feeling of anxiety may develop. Many children realize this fear to be so they find themselves wandering if they will "survive" their 16th birthday. It is a terrifying time that conflicts with the joy normally associated with birthdays.

Putting these differences aside, children do share some of their parent's feelings. One is the loneliness – the looking for comfort, the feeling that no one else knows what they are going through. Also, the unanswerable questions – "If I could have..." and "What If..?" may shadow the past and dim the future.

Julie Peterson
TCF – Pawtucket, RI

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 Thursday7-9; 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

October 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



October Craft Day

Our craft day will be October 28, 2017 at St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church starting at 10 am until 1 pm. We will be making an ornament similar to the photo using ribbon or fabric from your child's clothing. We will put your child's name on the ornament with a special metal tag. There will be an example at the October meeting along with a sign up sheet. Any questions contact Gail at angel4gail2016@gmail.