

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



July 2024
Volume 36, Number 7

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:

No meeting this month

*July 16 at 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.

No Craft meeting this month

*National Conference, New Orleans,
July 12-14*

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

REMINDER

There will not be a meeting
in July due to the meeting
date being July 4th.

Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there

with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force. You can be both brave and honest.

You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of

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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 to members



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

*Softly ... may peace
replace heartache
and cherished memories
remain with you always on
your child's birthday*

your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertimes.
Sascha Wagner

Crying Over Spilled Shampoo

A few sort months after the death of my son, Luke, I was showering with anticipation of washing my hair with a new coconut-scented shampoo that I just purchased a few days earlier. I lifted the bottle and let the shampoo spill into my hands. As I closed my eyes, the scent pulled me back in time, to the beach, and the unexpected memory of coconut oil -- back to a time of Luke's childhood.

The scent of that shampoo overflowed into all of my senses. For just a moment, I was back on the beach rubbing coconut oil on my little boy and I could see his beautiful dark skin, feel the warmth of his tiny hands, hear his familiar voice smell the wonderful scent of coconut oil. Once again, I could taste the salty ocean.

Then, I opened my eyes and, in an instant, I was drawn back into reality. It was then that I realized that the dark skin that I saw was only the back of my eyelids, the hands that I felt were my own..the voice I heard was the sound of the water trickling on my head from the shower, the smell of the coconut oil was my new shampoo, and the salty ocean was simply the taste of my very own tears.

Christine Ross, In Loving Memory of Lucas Christopher Ross 1979 - 2001

Am I Down for the Count?

I abhor boxing and have not a shred of comprehension about why it is called a "sport." That abhorrence, however, did not prevent me from being a fan of the Rocky movies from long ago. So, I have a general idea of the procedures and possible outcomes of this endorsed method of brutally

bashing in the head of an opponent. The terminology has seeped into my brain.

It's been four years since my son died and I wish I had the answer to this question: am I down for the count?

I don't know. I get out of bed. I function. I guess I would be considered productive.

Is there joy? Not really.

Is there gleeful anticipation of the future? Not at all. According to my friend Dennis Apple, this is called "slogging." So, I slog. I get through the days. I try to fulfill my obligations. I have a schedule. I have a "to-do" list and I cross off items.

And I try very, very hard to respect the advice I get from more seasoned grievers. I try to be open to the idea that this may get better, softer, easier. I try to have hope. I try to believe that there will come a day when I can consider a future that I actually want to imagine.

But I sometimes can't help but wonder: am I down for the count? Have the blows been too much? Can I get back to a standing position, even if wounded and bloodied? Can I stand?

Peggi Johnson

TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA

My Secret

Within days of my son's tragic death in a helicopter crash, it became my sad duty to remove his belongings from his apartment. In the numbing fog of shock and denial, I sifted through every drawer, cabinet, and closet. The wrenching decisions of what to with his clothes, his video tapes—even his toothbrush—made my head swim. Although I gave away many of the things to his roommate, other friends and family, and to "Goodwill," I kept the "special" things for myself—school yearbooks, pictures, certain articles of clothing, and his collection of crazy T-shirts.

I put this strange assortment of things in his footlocker, a remnant of his boarding school days. What

I didn't tell anyone was that I never laundered the T-shirts I found in the dirty clothes hamper. I just folded them and put them in the footlocker with my other memories. And from time to time during those first months of agonizing pain, I would sit on the floor, open the footlocker and sort through the treasured remnants of a life that had been such a large part of mine.

Then I would take the unwashed T-shirts and bury my face in them, inhaling the combined scents of his cologne, deodorant, and perspiration, mixed with the wetness of my tears. It made me feel, for just moment that he wasn't really so far away. "What a perverse thing to do!" I thought. I'm sure no one else would understand my doing such a thing—they would surely think I'd gone off the deep end.

So I never told anyone about this strange behavior—and the odd comfort it gave to me. Months later at a National Conference, I heard a speaker tell hundreds of bereaved parents assembled about a mother whose son had died suddenly and how she had refused to wash the soiled shirt he had been wearing, but found comfort in holding it close to her and smelling it. "My gosh," I thought, "maybe I'm not so crazy after all."

Since this experience I have discovered this is not as uncommon as I had once thought. The scents of a loved one are as much a part of them as the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand, or the tenderness of a kiss. There is nothing "perverse" in wanting to cling to these precious memories. Memories are what remain after the death of our child and there is comfort to be found in them.

Carole Ragland

TCF Houston-West Chapter, TX

Starting Over Again

As parents, how many times have we told our children to "try, try again?" "You can do it, just start over," we'd say, be it a coloring book not kept within the lines, learning to tie shoes, school assignments, or later,

other difficulties that life brings. Little did we think that this well-meaning advice we gave out of love for our children's well-being would be the words that we must follow. "Hang on." "Don't give up." "Try again, and start over." All this now applies to us. Had the situation been reversed, we would not have wanted our children to live out the rest of their lives in pain, and unable to go on. We would have wanted them to continue, not in constant sorrow, but with hope for renewal and better days ahead.

As we have said to them—they would be throwing it right back to us—it is a hard road that you must travel, but you can do it. What you wanted for me, I want for you. Do what you have to, to find your way out of the dark tunnel, and when you fail, pick yourself up and start over again. You can do it. What we wanted for our children is no less than they would want for us. If we could hear them, right now, they would be saying: LIVE, for life is not a moment. LOVE, for that is what really matters. GO ON, for we shall be together again, someday.

Mary Ann L.

TCF, Gloucester County, NJ

My Unwanted Passenger

It had been twenty three months since my first born son Maxwell had died. I was going about my business, and feeling, well, lets just say, as good as it gets. I opened a manila envelope that I found in a box in my garage. The very first thing I see is my deceased son's painted hand print on a piece of faded green construction paper. Attached was a poem that spoke of how I'd have this little hand print so I wouldn't forget what he was like when he got older...Gulp! I went on to read teacher comments on report cards that mentioned how beautiful and helpful of a person he was certain to be when he grew up. Ugh! There were photos of him leading in school plays, stories he'd written, and on and on, until I got to a handmade Mother's Day card that literally brought me to

my knees right there in the middle of my cold garage.

Once again there I was, side swiped with the intense pain that only another parent who's lost a child could understand.

A few days later and feeling very fragile from my discovery, I wondered if I could somehow, in some way, prepare for the next trigger, big or small. "Probably not," I resolved, "Not now anyway." I don't know, I was grasping at straws, I suppose. But I began to journal my feelings and thoughts about it all, as I often do. Inside my words, I became this little cartoon image, driving in this little blue cartoon car, with big black smoke rings trailing behind me. Putt.... Putt... Putt.... The cartoon images suddenly formed into a little cartoon story for me, and this is how it went... My Unwanted Passenger by Sherry Smith Feb. 21, 2020 With my hands clutched to the steering wheel, face not too far behind, there I am putt...putt... putting along the journey of my life, in my little blue car. A few back fires from time to time, and most everyone passing me by, there along side of me sits my unwanted passenger named Grief. From time to time I look over at him in a look of discontent, but mostly just in great sadness. Then suddenly out of nowhere something threatens to side swipe me on my journey.

I slam on my breaks, screeching to a complete stop. Bewildered, I mutter under my breath, "what was that?" I continue, "It seems to come out of no where, and ofen when I least expect it." Afer a few moments of sitting there frozen in uncertainty, I look over at my unwanted passenger, "you!" I say in contempt. Then, I hastily get out of my little blue car, and I storm around to the passengers side and swing open the door, "Get out!" I shout. "I don't want you here anymore!" And then, I barely choke out the next words, "I can't do this anymore." ...

My unwanted passenger folds his arms across his chest, nose upward

and in the other direction and replies, "If I were you, I'd get back into the car and get on with your journey. You see, I'm not going anywhere, not anytime soon anyway. You'd better figure out how you're going to do this thing called life while I'm with you. In fact, he went on, I may be with you for the rest of your life." I stood there for a few seconds swallowing the heavy lump of reality in my throat, and in a state of surrender I guess you could say, I shut his door. I then slowly walk around and climb back into my little blue car, clutch my hands back onto to the steering wheel, and putt... putt... putt... on I go.

Sherry Smith

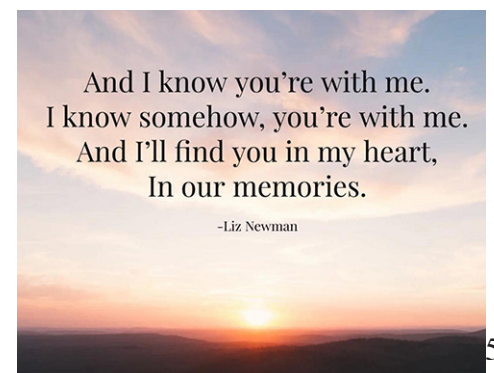
TCF

When a drunk driver killed my daughter, Allison, at age 19, it was a monumental effort to just breathe much less think my mind and body could survive. I was so dysfunctional that I lived every day in just my pajamas. Going to my first support group meeting of The Compassionate Friends, I pulled a pair of jeans and sweatshirt over my pajamas. I listened as each parent spoke of their child and their grief I heard those whose child died months ago and those whose child died years ago. These were living, breathing people in the same room with me and not just names and stories in a newspaper or book.

It's 14 years later and, on occasion, I'll wear a pair of pajamas under my clothes when I go to a meeting just to remind myself of where I was and how far I've come in this journey I share with others.

Barbara Reboratti,

Allison's mom, TCF Quakertown Chapter



And I know you're with me.
I know somehow, you're with me.
And I'll find you in my heart,
In our memories.

-Liz Newman

SIBS

A Letter to My Brother

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why?

How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer.

How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life?

What will I do?

How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near?

Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, The unfairness of losing you. I miss you. I think of you every day and feel you in my heart always.

Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason.

Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth.

You blessed us with your presence, your specialness.

I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy.

You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holemon

TCF Tuscaloosa, AL

Questions/Answers from Bereaved Siblings

All of a sudden I burst into tears and cannot control crying.

You have the freedom to cry when you need to. Crying is a normal reaction. You may feel embarrassed, but most people will react with sympathy and wish for themselves that they could cry freely. Crying is a natural outlet to grieving.

Why am I so mad at my sister for dying? She left me alone. I know it wasn't her fault, but I feel so guilty for being angry.

At some time everyone is angry at the person who died. Anger does not mean you loved them less; it means the loss is so great that you want the terrible pain to end.

I can't concentrate. I can't think and I can't remember anything. I think I am losing my mind.

You are not losing your mind, although it may feel that way. Your mind is probably overloaded. Not only do you have to go through your daily routine, but your mind is flooded with thoughts and feelings for your brother or sister. This is temporary; your memory and concentration will return over time.

I have terrible nightmares. Sometimes I dream I am dying. I can't tell anyone because they will think I am crazy. Am I?

Some grieving people experience intense dreams. Dreams serve as a healthy outlet for the intense feelings you have during the day. As time goes on and you deal with your feelings, your dreams will become less frightening.

I feel so guilty for the way I yelled at my brother. We would fight about the silliest things. I'll never be able to tell him how sorry I am.

Brothers and sisters in every family quarrel and don't apologize after every argument. Even though you fought, you still loved your brother and he loved you.

Suddenly my parents expect me to parent them. I just can't handle it.

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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

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: 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Phone: 877-969-0010; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

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

St. Clair Shores: 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, kjmac21@aol.com

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

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

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



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

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.

Christine & Frank Besak, whose beloved son, **Landen**, born 6/15; died 3/15; 18 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 is on back page.

♥ Rob & Joyce Gradinscak in memory of **Adam**: “Adam, 20th Birthday without you. Missing you!

♥ Tom & Connie McCann in memory of **Tom Jr., Joe Coffey, Ryan, Bryan, Mark & Jim**

Message: In memory of our son Tom Jr. On his Angel day 7/15 & Joe Coffey on his Angel day 7/26.

In memory of our sons Ryan “Ryfro”, Tom Jr., Bryan “Bryfro” Soupis considered a son to our family, Mark “Sparky” Abbott, Joe Coffey & Jim “Jimmy” Vick.

Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Time

“Time marches on” is the old cliché. It does march on with fury and determination, but some things stay the same. Your seat is still empty at the dinner table. Your bed is still not slept in. The sound of your laughter is only in our memories. Your photo framed in the family gallery of pictures stays the same while everyone else’s ages. Your phone number never shows on the caller ID. Your clothes are never found in the laundry; your name is hardly mentioned. But time marches on no matter how much we wish we could go back in time to the days when these

things were common occurrences.

Somehow we have managed to move along with time. At times it has been a real conscious struggle to keep afloat. We resist, not wanting to leave you in times past. We have managed to survive your death, but we are forever wounded. Sometimes the wound doesn’t show to others. Only to those who really take time to “peer” into the question. “How are you?” Those that dare venture and ask the question sincerely waiting for a heartfelt answer are truly special to us. These individuals touch our hearts in that special

place where our children still live.

They can make us smile and the tears flow without shame, just by acknowledging the pain is still there. They validate our child’s existence.

To have someone mention our child is truly a gift to a bereaved parent. Few are the non-bereaved that will venture to this “special place” and have the courage to enter. You can be assured that the bereaved parent doesn’t forget these instances when permission was given by you to share their son or daughter.

Karen C.

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

July 2024

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: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

This is truly one of the most unfair positions your grief puts you in. Try to share these feelings with your parents. Hopefully you will be better able to understand one another.

This Healing Journey an Anthology for Bereaved Siblings

