



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May & June 2020

Newsletter

Volume 20 No. 5&6

Dedicated with love to all children who have died, and their parents, families,

The Compassionate Friends

(TCF) is a national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age from any cause. There is no religious affiliation and no individual membership fees or dues are charged.

Founded in England in 1969, TCF was established in the United States in 1972. Presently, under the provision of the not-for-profit national organization, there are more than 700 local chapters in operation throughout the United States.

Mission Statement:

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers very intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provide highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

**"COME, MY PEOPLE,
ENTER YOUR CHAMBERS
AND SHUT YOUR DOORS BEHIND YOU;
HIDE YOURSELVES FOR A LITTLE
WHILE
UNTIL THE FURY HAS PASSED BY"**
ISAIAH 26: 20

Please contact us at 475-882-9695. Leave your name, number, and message, and we will return your call.

Please send all correspondence to the following address:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
P.O.Box 112
Stratford, CT 06615

National Office
The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(877) 969-0010
nationaloffice@compassionate-friends.org
www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Coordinator
Mary Lemley
203 483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

Monthly Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing is now the new standard. The steering committee of the TCF Bridgeport/Stratford Chapter is dedicated to the emotional well being of its members, and we are committed to helping you through this difficult time.

Until the government of CT deems it safe to resume activities, **our meetings will be held virtually**. On the day of the meeting, you will be receiving an email with instructions on how to log on and join the meeting on the app **Zoom** or from your phone.

Date: Second Tuesday of each month

Time: 6:45 pm - 8:45 pm

Place: Virtual Reality through Zoom or phone

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and contact us at our

TCF Bridgeport/Stratford email:
contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Leader

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Co-Chapter Leader

Dr. Charles Kochan

Secretary

Janet Spray

Treasurer

Leslie Minasi

Website Co-ordinator

Leslie Minasi

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka & Anne Castaldo

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso and Anne Castaldo

Bridgeport Chapter's New E-Mail Address:

contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:

www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:

www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

GRIEVING, HEALING, GROWING ...

Challenging In Many Ways

We hope this message finds you physically well and that you are staying safe. We are all trying to do what we can to adjust to the challenges of the current crisis. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your loved ones during these unsettled times. Like so many, our hearts are heavy as we hear each day about the devastating impact COVID-19 is having on our communities.

We are living in truly unprecedented times, the likes of which we have never seen for the breadth of their reach, depth of their impact, or the length of their uncertainty. As we navigate through these moments of crisis, we are being tested on every level - tested as individuals, tested as organizations, and tested as a society.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought the world to a halt. Everyone is trying to adjust to the shut-down of the economy, to social distancing, and to the absence of the life that we knew only weeks ago. The effects of this pandemic will be discussed and analyzed for a long time. There will be many articles written about the devastating effects that social distancing has had on those who were grieving the death of a loved one from the COVID-19 virus.

Nested among this chaos are we - We who have experienced the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Our hearts go out to all the newly bereaved. Those of us on the Steering Committee who are "seasoned grieverers" realize and empathize with our members who are trying to navigate through the early stages of their pain and sorrow while also having to deal with the pandemic. Please know that we are here for you. Please reach out and contact us.

All of us are being affected physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually during this time of social distancing and isolation. Many of us may be

feeling bouts of depression, mood swings, irritability, loneliness, and fear. Unfortunately, these feelings can exacerbate the condition of the newly bereaved, but they also may bring those of us who are farther along on the journey back to the deep darkness of the days and months after our child, sibling, or grandchild died. Here are a few actions that you can proactively do that may help you battle those feelings.

1. Limit the watching of news programs. Beginning and ending the day with daunting statistics is not helpful. Instead watch reruns of comedy shows such as "I Love Lucy," "The Dick Van Dyke Show," "The Andy Griffith Show," or "Gilligan's Island."
2. Drink plenty of water. Staying hydrated is important for physical and mental well being.
3. Get enough sleep. Try herbal tea, melatonin, meditation techniques, or counting one's blessings before bed time.
4. Exercise or walk when possible. Nature is beautiful at this time of the year. It is amazing that spring's finery is not affected by this virus.
5. Eat healthy.
6. Sit in the sun. Vitamin D is very important for the immune system.
7. Find something productive, creative, and fun to do each day such as putting a jigsaw puzzle together, doing a crossword, sudoku, or using an App on your phone.
8. Keep in contact with family and friends. Text, use social media, or make phone calls.
9. Wear a mask and gloves when going out to the supermarket or even when taking a walk. Wash hands thoroughly. Follow all of the rules of the health and government officials.
10. Find a support person who has a compassionate listening ear.

Above all, be kind to yourself. Give yourself the compassionate, gentle, loving care that you always give to others. Find the positive that will counteract the negative. Spiritually, stay strong and steadfast and cling ever so faithfully to hope. According to the poet Emily Dickinson, "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tune without words - and never stops - at all."

Let it be so!

*Bridgeport/Stratford, CT TCF Chapter's
Steering Committee*

A Father's Journey *Finding the Future*

When my son died, I lost my future on two levels. On a very practical level, I was consumed with grief that bombarded me with the thoughts of the past and made me fight to survive the present. The one day at a time theory was a reality. There was no place for thoughts of the future.

On the other level, my future was crushed. I worked and lived for my wife and me, sure; but primarily I worked and planned for my son. He was my future. He figured in a big way in every plan I made, whether it was next week, next year, or next decade. Now I ask myself, how can I plan ahead when the most important reason in my life is gone forever?

Today, when I remember my six years with Michael, it is without doubt the best six years of my life. That's a great memory until I realize that the rest of my life will probably fall short of those six years. It's really tough to plan a future that falls short of the past.

Is there a solution to this helpless, lost feeling? There is no universal solution that I've discovered.

I have my own personal memories of the tremendous pride that Michael had in me. He showed that pride in many ways on many occasions. If I let my life wither away, if I don't live the best life I'm capable of living, I'll be letting Michael down. The strength to keep my commitment to Michael and myself comes and goes, but I will succeed eventually.

My ultimate commitment is to find the best way to help those around me to the best of my ability. I've not determined which path to follow today, but the choices are unlimited. I can work with other bereaved parents or with fellow veterans who are less fortunate than I am or with Big Brothers of America.

Whatever choice I make means being aware of the needs of others and devoting time and effort necessary to help them. This message is strong for me. I can't and will not ignore it.

My future can never be what I had previously envisioned. But it can and **will** be worthwhile. My search for the right path will create a future for me which will honor my son while helping others.

Search for the future! It's there for all of us if we search hard enough.

-Tom Murray
TCF, Cincinnati, OH

"Grief is not an enemy -- It is a friend.
It is the natural process
of walking through hurt
and growing
because of the walk.
Let it happen!
Stand up tall to friends
and to yourself
and say,
'Don't take my grief away from me.
I deserve it,
and
I am going to have it,'"

-Doug Manning
from his book
Don't Take My Grief Away from Me

"When you are sorrowful
look again in your heart,
and you shall see
that in truth,
you are weeping
for that
which
has been
your delight."

-Kahil Gibran
The Prophet

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

We all know how difficult these special days - Birthdays and Death Anniversaries - can be. This feature in our newsletter helps us to be aware of who is facing these special days each month. We ask that you keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing such dates during May and June in your thoughts and in your hearts.

JOSEPH SALOMONE	May 1
CHARLES PATAKY	May 1
PAUL-JOHN HERON	May 1
JAMES HRZIC	May 2
KAREN BRUNO	May 3
AMBER KINGERSKY	May 3
BRIAN MICHAEL CANCELLIERI	May 4
DANNY MURPHY	May 5
CARL R. WENNERSTRAND TALBOT	May 5
SHAUN DOWD	May 6
WILLIAM MARIANO VARGAS	May 7
NINA TERESA POETA	May 9
KENNETH A. BARTEK, JR. (KJ)	May 9
PATRICK J. DUBEE	May 11
JEREMY COLLINS	May 12
WILLIAM A BAKER IV	May 13
CONOR ROBERT BOWEN	May 13
BRIAN TUZIK	May 14
JON MALONE	May 16
JOEL ALEXIS NIEVES	May 17
JOSE A. SUAREZ	May 18
JAMES CARBONE	May 20
DAVID JOHN O' HARE	May 20
JESSICA BURROWS	May 20
DENISE PIETROWSKI	May 22
RONNIE HILL	May 23
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL TOKARSKI, JR.	May 24
SABINA ELIZABETH CECCARELLI	May 25
HERB GULLBERG IV	May 25
NEIL HEILWEIL	May 25
WILLIAM J. SAVO	May 26
CURTIS BUCCI	May 26
BRIAN LANEUVILLE	May 27
JESSIE EBSTEIN	May 27
RYAN EDWARD SIMPSON	May 27
JENNIFER D. GUSTAFSON	May 28
SHAWN WATSON	May 29
JOSEPH DONALD "TREY" WARREN III	May 30
FRANCIS APGAR	May 30

*May the sweet memory of
the child you love,
SHINE brightly on
this birthday.
Our wish is that
this day of remembrance
will bring you gentle peace.*

ETHAN THORNTON	June 2
WILLIAM GAGLIARDI	June 2
STEPHEN JOSEPH MEDEIROS	June 4
CHRISTOPHER ROBERT ETES	June 5
JONATHAN SIMKO	June 5
JOHN SCINTO	June 6
CHERYL PETRETTI	June 9
SUSAN WOLSSNER	June 10
TORIN GREGORY BOND	June 11
JENNIFER LEIBOWITZ ANTONIER	June 11
JOHN SAMUEL SMITH	June 11
RON CRISTIANO	June 12
BRIAN PETER PETRUCELLI	June 12
MARGARITA B. RAMOS	June 13
EDWARD J. STAMPER IV	June 15
KATIE FONTNEAU	June 18
BRIAN CASTRILLON	June 18
ADAM EDWARD NDREU	June 18
ANNETTE KEMEZA	June 20
HALLE ROOT	June 20
HOLLY FLANNERY	June 22
ANGELINA JOY PEARSON	June 22
JORDAN PIERSON	June 22
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL McETTRICK	June 23
ROGER NEALLEY	June 26
JAFAR KARZOUN	June 30
JOSEPH DAVID GAGLIARDI SR.	June 30



BIRTHDAYS



Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

JAFAR KARZOUN	May 1	RONALD ALLEN, JR.	May 30
MICHAEL JOSEPH HURTA	May 2	CRYSTAL LYNN HAYDEN	May 30
KATHLEEN ELLEEN BAYE	May 3	JUSTIN JOSEPH MARGITAY-BALOGH	May 31
KAREN BRUNO	May 4	LAWRENCE MORRELLI	May 31
STEVEN WALL	May 5	JOSEPH SALOMONE	June 1
ERIC DAVID JOHNSON	May 6	SCOTT McCLENATHAN	June 2
CHRISTOPHER REYES PEREZ	May 6	CHRIS LEAHY	June 4
JEREMY COLLINS	May 7	FRANCIS APGAR	June 6
DAVID E. CILENTO	May 8	ADELE ADESUWA IYAMU	June 7
CARL ANTHONY JOHNSTON	May 9	JONATHAN SIMKO	June 7
JEREMIAH S. SALVATORE	May 9	BARBARA YOUNG	June 8
DERICK JAMES SPRINGER	May 10	HOWIE TASSITANO	June 10
BRIDGET GRACE CABLE	May 10	JESSIE EBSTEIN	June 10
EDWARD J. STAMPER IV	May 11	NEIL HEILWEIL	June 11
WILLIAM (BILLY) A. SLOSSAR	May 12	Senior Airman LAWRENCE P. MAN LAPIT IV	June 16
RYAN THOMAS WALSH	May 13	STEVEN C. BELENCHIA	June 17
CHRISTOPHER PAPP	May 14	ASHLEY JOY	June 17
EDWARD ANGELO PIPKIN	May 15	JOSEPH ANTHONY PELOSO IV	June 18
TIARRA WEB	May 15	ALAN RICHARD HOFFMAN, SR.	June 20
JOSEPH DONALD "TREY" WARREN III	May 16	ANNA MARIA RINO	June 22
SEAN GARRETT RICE	May 16	GABRIELLA JOSIE MARIA RINO	June 22
TORIN GREGORY BOND	May 16	SEAN EAREL	June 23
JASON GLATZ	May 17	DANNY STEIN	June 25
ROBERT YOUNG	May 17	STEPHEN F. ZURAW	June 25
DAVID SAMPSON	May 17	ROGER NEALLEY, JR.	June 26
DANIEL LAWRENCE TOOLE	May 18	BRIAN CASTRILLON	June 28
PETER BRADFORD KOVACS	May 19	JOANN SIMKO FASANELLA	June 28
TATE ARLETTA SCHEER	May 19	DAVID JOHN O'HARE	June 29
SARAH CYNTHIA KOURY	May 20	ANDREW JAMES DONNELLAN	June 29
PETER BUTANOWICZ	May 22	JUSTIN SMITH	June 29
JOHN BRADY CHAPIN	May 24	RICHARD ELIOT BONOSKY	June 30
DAVID MICHAEL VOGT	May 26	STEPHEN JOSEPH MEDEIROS	June 30
JOAN P. BURBY TELLONE	May 27	LORI ARGONESE	June 30
MELISSA STUPAK MONTUORI	May 27		
KASANDRA SANDERS	May 28		
DANIEL QUIRK	May 28		
MARISSA NICOLE ARGUETA	May 29		
CRAIG ARSENAULT	May 29		
BRIAN LANEUVILLE	May 29		

Angelversaries

The Compassionate

Corner

A Mother's Grief

Written By Nisha Zenoff PHD

TCF NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

As debilitating as a mother's grief is, it is a natural process that contains the seeds for potential growth. Many bereaved mothers are frightened of their despair and want to stifle their suffering. Likewise, a common attitude of friends and family toward the grieving mother is that her grief is a bad thing-to be lessened in whatever way possible. That what she needs is to be "cheered up or made better." But negating her grief robs a grieving mother of an opportunity to become her most powerful and integrated self. Rather than trying to stop the pain of grief, persons close to the grieving mother should offer compassion and acceptance of the mother and her despair. So too, the mother herself is challenged to compassionately feel and accept her pain.

Mothers focusing on their process of grief rather than denying it, observing and following its patterns capture the potential for growth inherent in the grieving process. Through focusing on and following this process, the devastating effect of losing a child can be transformed into an experience of great meaning for the mother. Mothers do survive the death of a child whether through hard work or a commitment to grow or just through the passage of time. And through that survival comes a deeper sense of compassion for others. As one mother said, "I have a bigger room for people's sorrow than I did before."

As for myself, I have found that the intensity and character of my grief continues to change over time, but the depth of love for my son remains forever constant."

From My Spare Room

-Judy Helson TCF Saskatoon, Canada

If I had one request to make of those who came to be with us after our son was killed, it would have been to ask them to let us grieve our way.

When six year old Danny died in a farm accident, my husband and I immediately acted out the roles which came naturally for us. While he huddled in a chair in shock and pain, I showed strength in front of others. While he was either lost in another world or shaking with sobs, I appeared dry-eyed. We did this not by choice, but as the result of individual natures.

Others were uncomfortable with our coping methods. At first I needed time alone to walk, think, and cry. I wasn't allowed that. Later when I wanted to talk about Danny, most people sat quietly waiting for a chance to change the subject.

My husband needed to be allowed to feel pain and cry. When he was overcome by tears, he was fed strong valium by a friend. The day of the funeral, he was told, "You've got to pull yourself together." That same day another person said to me, "You better not take too many of those pills," and refused to believe that I hadn't had any. My husband wasn't supposed to cry. I wasn't crying enough.

However, it wasn't long before our social conditioning molded us into acceptable people with appropriate coping strategies. I cope now by talking with friends, sharing my grief with those who are willing to cry with me. My husband acts the way a man is expected to act. He talks to no one. He doesn't cry. While I have spent hard months and years crying and talking and working through my pain, my husband is trapped within his grief. And I could weep at that terrible injustice.

May is Mother's Day

In the 19th century groups of mothers whose sons fought or died in the Civil War would meet. In 1868 Ann Jarvis organized a committee for Mother's Friendship Day: a day for mothers to gather with former Union and Confederate soldiers to promote reconciliation. In the years before the Civil War, Jarvis had helped to start Mother's Day Work Clubs to teach local women how to care for their children.

Ann Jarvis wanted a special day to be an annual memorial for mothers. She died in 1905 before the annual celebrations actually were established, but her daughter Anna Jarvis continued her mother's work in honoring the sacrifices mothers made for their children.

The first official celebration was at a Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia in May 1908. It was organized by Anna Jarvis and was financially backed by John Wanamaker, a store owner from Philadelphia who held a Mother's Day event on the very same day. Anna Jarvis continued her efforts and

wanted Mother's Day to be added to the national calendar by writing letters to newspapers and politicians. By 1912 the day would be celebrated annually in many states and towns, and in 1914 President Wilson signed a measure that established Mother's Day as an official annual celebration on the second Sunday in May.

The holiday was very popular and would soon be heavily commercialized by card companies and florists. Anna Jarvis soured on the commercial interests associated with Mother's Day and around 1920 urged people to stop buying gifts and flowers for their mothers. She was sorry she invented the day and said it had to be a day of sentiment, not profit. She would even lobby to see it removed from the national calendar. Until her death in 1948, Jarvis fought against charities that used Mother's Day for fundraising and the commercialism of florists, card manufacturers, and other companies that were destroying her Mother's Day.

June is Father's Day

After hearing a sermon about Anna Jarvis' Mother's Day at the Central Methodist Episcopal Church in 1909, Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd told her pastor that fathers should have a similar holiday honoring them. Mrs. Dodd wanted to especially honor her own father, the Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart who as a single parent reared his six motherless children with love, sacrifice, and never ending devotion.

Mrs. Dodd held her first Father's Day celebration at the Spokane, Washington YMCA in 1910. She continued to promote the event even though it did not have much success initially. In the 1930's Dodd returned to Spokane and started promoting this day again, raising awareness at the national level. She reached out to the manufacturers of ties, tobacco pipes, and clothing to help her cause. Americans resisted the holiday during the next decades perceiving it as just an attempt by mer-

chants to replicate the commercial success of Mother's Day. Newspapers frequently featured cynical and sarcastic jokes and comics that attacked this day.

In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson wanted to make the day official, but Congress vetoed against it. President Calvin Coolidge recommended that the day be observed in 1924; yet once again it was defeated by Congress. Finally in 1957, Maine Senator Margaret Chase Smith wrote a proposal accusing Congress of ignoring fathers for 40 years while honoring mothers thus "singling out just one of two parents." In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson issued the first Presidential Proclamation honoring fathers, designating the third Sunday in June as Father's Day.

Finally, the day was made a permanent national holiday when President Richard Nixon signed it into law in 1972.



MAKING MOTHER'S DAY AND FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Posted on May 1st, 2017 on The Compassionate Friends Website.

Here are a few hints to help you through these days after the loss of a child.

- Pamper yourself-this is a special day in your life. You are a parent forever and your child is your child forever.
- Do what you need to do-what helps you. Grieve your way.
- Be with those who surround you with love, not demands or advice.
- Plan ahead-do things that make you feel good or give you a moment's peace.
- Start new rituals to make new memories.
- Share your thoughts with family members; decide together what the day should include. (If you are alone, find a good friend.)
- Include deceased children in the day-through prayer, lighting a candle, telling stories about them, looking through pictures, planting flowers or a garden, doing a good deed, writing about them, making their favorite recipe.
- Join with another bereaved family to honor this day and have mutual support.
- Start a garden or add to a special garden in memory of your child.
- Use this day to plant spring flowers so you can always see your child in each bloom and each bouquet that you cut.
- Visit the cemetery if that helps your heart on this day.
- Plant a flower or shrub that will come to bloom this time of year.
- Do something special for someone else or something special in your child's name (helping Cancer Care, MADD, a Compassionate Friends' Chapter, Scouting, a nursing home, etc.)
- Listen to music that makes your heart feel good.
- Cook some favorite recipes that your child enjoyed or cooked for you.
- Buy a present for yourself from your child and enjoy the comfort it brings you.
- Write a poem or article in memory of your child, sharing memories or whatever has helped you.
- Attend a family gathering of relatives – their love and support can give you a lift on this day.
- Make a booklet of favorite poems that help your heart, and give copies to dear relatives and friends in memory of your child.
- Take part in a special church ceremony honoring Mother's Day and Father's Day.
- Pray to your child-talking is the best medicine and prayer is simply talking.
- Set aside some special time to grieve, unloading all the frustration and sadness that can envelop you on such a day giving you time to meditate alone.
- Write a letter to your child, telling what's in your heart (perhaps some unfinished business or some new blessing that has enriched your life).
- Allow the tears to flow- crying is healing and allows a release for your feelings.
- Think of a way to "share your child with the world"-making sure his or her memory lives on through scholarships, writing, good deeds.
- Give and get plenty of hugs.

~ Elaine Stillwell, TCF Rockville Centre, NY