



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January & February 2021

Newsletter

Volume 21 No.1 & 2

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 550 active 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.

*"The deeper that sorrow
carves into your being,
the more joy
you can contain."*

Kahlil Gibran
"On Joy and Sorrow"

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 Address
The Compassionate Friends
48660 Pontiac Trail #930805
Wixom, MI 48393
(630)990-0010 (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

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

Monthly Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and wearing a mask 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.

Since the cases of the COVID virus have continued to rise in CT, **our meetings will NOT be held at Sterling House Community Center**, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06615 but will continue **virtually on Zoom** until further notice. 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. Please continue safety protocols!

Date: Second Tuesday of each month
(January 12, 2021 & February 9, 2021)

Time: 6:45 pm - 8:00 pm

Place: Virtual Reality
through Zoom or phone

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and contact us at: contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders

Dr. Charles Kochan and Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Secretary

Janet Spray

Treasurer

Leslie Minasi

Website Co-ordinator

Leslie Minasi

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso

Resource Facilitator

Anne Castaldo

Zoom Co-ordinator

Kristen Cable

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...

The Journey of Hope

What do you mean when you talk of hope?

That's a perfectly legitimate question. We talk about hope all the time, but we do not often define just what we mean. Hope seems to be such a clear and simple concept doesn't it? But what exactly does "hope" mean when we have lost children to death, and when we feel as if we could never enjoy anything ever again?

Those who speak about hope wish, first of all, that the pain of one's first grief will lesson. While no one can guess or calculate how long the phase of intense grief will last, it always lasts longer than we want. This is the time when grief keeps you from thinking clearly, when you are confused about almost everything, even about things which have nothing to do with the tragedy. It is the time when you are always tired but can seldom sleep enough, the time when your energy seems to be drained by the sheer effort of staying alive. You find that nothing consoles you, life hurts, and feeling hurts.

Whenever this time is over, you may be able to function reasonably well. What griever has not walked around doing a good job at the office, while feeling like an empty shell? At that point you may even be able, briefly, to concentrate on something other than your dead child. There is a small hope then, to wish for a little more strength, a little less pain, a good night's rest. Perhaps this is the time when you can start talking more clearly to someone about the way you feel or what you think you might want to do for yourself and other grievers.

The schedule is different for each person. When we talk about hope, we start out with a wish for your recovery from what may have felt like a mental illness. Except you need to remember that it was no mental illness at all; it was an almost insurmountable onslaught of pain.

The next step of hope comes when you realize (sometimes with regret) that you will continue living, but most of the pain is still there. Rooms are left unchanged, clothing remains hanging in closets. You still cry when you see photographs or when you remember the days before the child died. There is no escape from the awareness of loss, which still dominates your daily existence, no matter what you plan to undertake. This is usually a long phase, and no amount of rational resolve or practical determination takes the ache away. However, you do sleep better.

Next on the journey of hope comes the first signal of comfort. While you still cry and hurt about the loss of your child, you sometimes find yourself thinking of soothing memories. You are even able to smile about things you remember. This is the time when a memory that makes you smile is often followed by tears. Your emotions are alive and powerful, and you realize that your reactions are quite natural. Not all feelings you have at this time are focused on the main event, the death of your child, but you begin to consider realistically that there are many other things in life. As heavy as this phase still is for most grievers, it is a great deal more manageable and gentler than the tearing pain of early grief.

The next step comes imperceptibly. There are moments at first, then hours when your mind is not preoccupied with remembering your dead child. You can think of other tasks and events without simultaneously thinking about a grief-related memory. Before, you may have been so closely connected to grief that you connected any experience to your child's death, even if an event or a task had nothing to do with them.

You may be surprised feeling like "This has nothing to do with my grief." Such intervals are rare at first, and you totally divorce feelings and thoughts from your memories. Initially, all grieving parents find such a time difficult to imagine, and the inner quietness actually arrives before we are able to believe in it.

But there is a balance that achieves itself; it gently eases itself into your days and nights. At this time a preponderance of pleasant memories makes itself at home in your heart. You smile at things remembered without crying; you can call up the details of a memory without being overwhelmed by heartache.

These are the most basic stages of hope. There are many fine and varied distinctions, and the stages do not clearly follow one or the other. **But when we speak of hope, we generally mean the griever's return to a less painful and more confident form of living.**

We are not talking about denying the death or forgetting the child we lost. We are speaking of a change in feeling about them. Among things we think of when we talk about hope is the time when we reach the ability to "recall our memories in tranquility." It is the time of day when we realize that having children, even if only for a small part of our lifetime, was first and foremost a gift and a treasure. While we will always want to keep awareness of our dead children, the time will come when we can live at peace as helpers and friends to others in grief (perhaps deliberately to honor the memory of our dead children) or to find unencumbered enjoyments. When the sense of loss is overcome by a sense of acceptance and peace, **when we find new things to do with our life, then we will have completed the journey of hope from disbelief to struggle to achievement.**



Sascha Wagner



Love Gifts

A Love Gift is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends Local Chapter. It is usually in honor of a child who has died. It can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died. It can also be a gift of thanks that their own children are alive and well or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. There are no fees or dues to belong to The Compassionate Friends. As parents and others find hope and healing within the group, they sometimes make a Love Gift to our chapter. Love Gifts allow us to offer resources such as this newsletter, our website, zoom, books, and brochures to assist grieving families.

These gifts are much needed and are always welcome.


Love Gifts are acknowledged every two months in the newsletter. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law. *The Compassionate Friends is a registered 501(c) (3) organization.* Please send your request and check to our treasurer at:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter

c/o Leslie Minasi,
P.O. Box 112, Stratford, CT 06615

Please make out "Love Gift" checks to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter.

DAWN KOSARKO 
Forever loved,
prayed for,
and remembered.
Love, Mom and Dad

In loving memory
of
STEVEN SPRAY
for his Angel Day
donated at the Candle Lighting Event
With love, Mom

In loving remembrance
of
Carlo Minasi
Happy 30th Birthday, Carlo.
You are always in our hearts;
we miss you every minute.
With love, Mom and Dad

Happy Birthday Sean!
Love,
Mommy xo

*"joy and sorrow are inseparable...
together they come,
and when one sits alone with you...
remember that the other is asleep
under your bed."
-Kahlil Gibran*

In loving memory
of
Joseph Peloso
"Always in our hearts"
With love,
Mom and Dad

TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

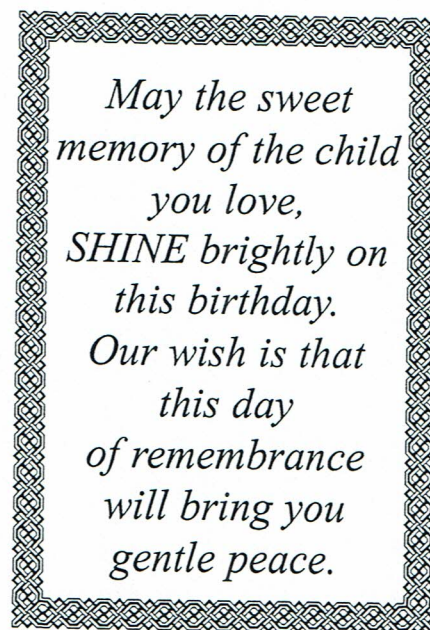
Name _____
Address _____
State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____ City _____ E-Mail _____
Message _____

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 January and February in your thoughts and in your hearts.

ADAM JARVIS	January 1
RYAN JOYCE	January 2
JOANN SIMKO PASANELLA	January 3
JENNIFER McLEOD	January 5
JAMES BLOMBERG	January 5
LAURIE POVINELLI	January 6
AUSTIN BUONI	January 7
VICTOR M. MARELLA, JR.	January 8
RYAN PHILLIPS	January 8
WENDY JOAN CARPENTER	January 8
MARIA SKENDERIS ISOLA	January 9
BERNARD E. KOETSCH II	January 9
SCOTT LAWRENCE BOOS	January 10
FRED A. POPPA, JR.	January 11
JOHN NAPOLITANO	January 11
MARISSA IRENE IRWIN	January 11
DENISE GLOVER	January 13
BRIA MARIE McCONNELL VILLANUEVA	January 14
KADEELYN KONSTANTINO	January 15
RYAN CHARLES BRENNAN	January 18
STEPHEN M. CESLIK, III	January 18
BRIAN WATCKE	January 19
ROY H. SMITH, JR.	January 20
LISA MARIE MANCINI	January 21
JARED ARTHUR LEVINE	January 21
SARAH CYNTHIA KOURY	January 22
DJ ART	January 24
CHRISTOPHER REYES PEREZ	January 24
JOHN R. JONES, IV	January 26
STEPHEN D. TOMASKY	January 26
JOHN BRADY CHAPIN	January 26
SEAN GARRETT RICE	January 29
KATHLEEN ELLEEN BAYE	January 29
CHRISTOPHER HUBINGER	January 30

SARA BETH ROBINSON HUSZAR	February 1
CAITLIN LOGAN	February 4
MICHELLE PETERS	February 4
ANDREW JAMES DONNELLAN	February 5
CHRISTOPHER MULLIGAN	February 5
BRENNA MCMENAMEY	February 5
KAREN WIEGMAN	February 7
BRENDAN THOMAS MURREN	February 7



BIRTHDAYS

THOMAS CHISHOLM	February 10
AMANDA LYNN DAIGLE	February 10
GRACE MARIE EVANKO	February 13
BRIAN JAMES CHEPYA	February 13
DAWN KOSARKO	February 14
ALEX RECUPINO	February 14
DONNA CARPENTER	February 15
VALERIE F. POPPA	February 15
ALYSSA ANNE MUSHIN	February 17
JENNIFER ANN BATTISTA RUSSO	February 18
EVON EDWARDS	February 19
ASHLEY JOY	February 19
ANDREW BOBKO	February 20
BRANDON MICHAEL VELEZ	February 22
ADELE ADESUWA IYAMU	February 23
GARY SALVATORE BELLARD	February 23
SEAN RUSSELL	February 24
MITCHELL ELLIOT HARRIS	February 24
MARCUS RAMOS	February 24
HOWIE TASSITANO	February 24
WILLIAM CLEARY	February 25
JEAN PHILLIPE LOMINY	February 29
ROBERT S. MURPHY	February 29

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

A life that touches the hearts of others goes on forever.

SINCERE PETTWAY	January 3	
CHARLES ROBERT MARTIN	January 4	
DAVID L. CARLSON	January 4	
CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH HALEY	January 4	
KENNETH (KJ) A. BARTEK, JR.	January 4	
JOHN SCINTO	January 6	
ROBERT SMUNIEWSKI	January 8	
DENISE PIETROWSKI	January 9	
SCOTT MILO	January 11	
KEVONNA EDWARDS	January 12	
JAMES CARBONE	January 12	
BRENDAN THOMAS MURREN	January 12	
BRIA MARIE McCONNELL VILLANUEVA	January 14	
STEPHEN D. TOMASKY	January 15	
MICHELLE PETERS	January 16	
GINA DECHELLO	January 16	
ADAM JARVIS	January 17	
JULIAN CERRATO	January 19	
ALAN BARNETT WEINER	January 20	
		WILLIAM MARIANO VARGAS
		JESSICA ELIZABETH KOLARIC
		VICTOR MARELLA, JR.
		JAMES HRZIC
		JONAS BLACKWELL
		OZZY ZACK
		STEPHEN M. CESLIK, III
		GEORGE W. JULESON, IV
		WILLIAM (BILLY) RUDOLPH
		January 22
		January 26
		January 27
		January 27
		January 29
		January 30
		January 30
		January 31
		January 31
JAMIE RITTER	February 2	
DEBRA NAPOLITANO	February 4	
KRISTIN ANN CARVETH	February 4	
MASHA ROBINSON	February 4	
AMBER KINGERSKY	February 5	
COLIN J. BUSSOLARI	February 6	
DANNY MURPHY	February 7	
DEXTER HILL	February 7	
KADEELYN KONSTANTINO	February 7	
NICK FELISKO	February 8	
NANCY KELLER	February 8	
BEVERLY BRUNO	February 12	
BOBBY BONACCI	February 12	
MICHAEL WRIGGLESWORTH	February 13	
LORENZO ZACHARIAH DEADERICK	February 14	
ZOE ELIZABETH ANYAN	February 16	
DONNA CARPENTER	February 17	
JOSEPH KOWALCZYK, JR.	February 18	
MARCI BYITECK	February 19	
DARRELL BENNETT	February 20	
DAVID EHMAN	February 21	
NATHAN BURROWS	February 22	
ERIN BABINEAU	February 22	
ERIC S. HULTZERG	February 26	
KEITH McCARTHY	February 26	
PAUL-JOHN HERON	February 28	
ALEXA RAE HERON	February 28	
RYAN CHARLES BRENNAN	February 28	

Hope

is the whisper in our soul
that tells us
all will be well.

Angelversaries

COMPASSIONATE VERSE

Let There Be Light

The New Year comes
when all the world is ready
for changes, resolutions -
great beginnings.

For us, to whom
that stroke of midnight means
a missing child remembered,
for us the new year comes
more like another darkness.

But let us not forget
that this year may be the year
when love and hope and courage
find each other somewhere
in the darkness
to lift their voice and speak:
let there be light.

At New Year's Time

Time does not touch
the firmament of stars
with the simplicity
of days and nights and years.
The rhythm of this smallness
we call earth
is only whisper among galaxies.

Beyond the measured years
which rise and fall,
Beyond the calendars
of human time and place,
the meaning of this smallness
we call life
will find us somewhere
in eternity.

New Year, New Year

New Year, New Year
what will you bring?
how many smiles to smile
how many songs to sing?
New Year, New Year
what will you give?
how many children will
prosper and live?
New Year, New Year
come and be kind.
let us have hope again
and peace of mind.

All three poems
from

The Poems of Sascha Wagner

To Be Shared...

by Leslie Minasi -TCF Bridgeport, CT

Sunday night after the candle lighting, I was outside around 2 am. I had just brought the dogs out, and I was looking up at the sky because the stars were so incredibly bright.

And I was thinking about my son Carlo (not that I'm never not thinking about him ..)

All of a sudden, there was a shooting star!
And then another!

I kept asking for 6 because that is Carlo's lucky number.
I finally received 5 shooting stars.

And I asked Carlo for another, and there it was!

It was a very spiritual ex[perience], and I really did feel he was with me.



LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY

by Darcie Sims (in loving memory) & (in gratefulness for all she has written)

"Why does it hurt so much? Why is this grief so incapacitating? If only the hurt weren't so crushing." Sound familiar? All of us have known hurts before, but none of our previous "ouchies" can compare with the hurt we now feel. Nothing can touch the pain of burying a child.

Yet, most of us have discovered that the sun still comes up. We still have to function. We did not die when our child did, even though we wished we could have. So . . . we are stuck with this pain, this grief, and what to do with it. Surely we can't live like THIS forever!

There are no magic formulas for surviving grief. There are a few commonly recognized patterns for grief, but even those are only guidelines. What we do know is that the emptiness will never go away. It will become tolerable and liveable . . . some day.

TIME . . . the longest word in our grief. We used to measure TIME by the steps of our child . . . the first word, first tooth, first date, first car . . . now we don't have that measure anymore. All we have is TIME, and it only seems to make the hurt worse!

So what do we do? We give ourselves TIME . . . to hurt, to grieve, to cry. TIME to choke, to scream. TIME to be "crazy" and TIME to remember.

Be nice to yourself! Don't measure your progress through grief against anyone else. Be your own time keeper.

Don't push. Eventually, you will find the hours and days of grief have turned to minutes and then moments . . . but don't expect them to go away. We will always hurt. You don't get over grief . . . it only becomes tolerable and liveable.

Change your focus a bit. Instead of dwelling on how much you lost - try thinking of how much you had. Try letting the good memories come over you as easily as the awful ones do. We didn't lose our child . . . The child died. We didn't lose the love that flowed between us . . . it still flows, just differently now.

Does it help to know that if we didn't love so very much, it would not hurt so badly? Grief is the price we pay for love. And as much as it hurts, I'm very glad I loved!

Don't let death cast ugly shadows but rather warm memories of the loving times you shared. Even though death comes, LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!

We survive the unthinkable-
 We survive for others-
 And then, very slowly,
 we survive for ourselves.
 Because only through the good
 we do for others
 in our child's name
 will the beauty of
 spirit, mind, and body
 that was our child
 live forever.

-Kay Lokoff TCF Valley Forge, PA

New Year Resolutions

Whether or not you are one to make resolutions, it is the hope, of the members of the Steering Committee of your Bridgeport, CT TCF chapter, that one or more of these thoughts will resonate with you. In turning the page to begin a new year, you can be resolute as you move forward in your grief journey.

- I **resolve** not to place time limits on my grief; it will take as long as it takes.
- I **resolve** to acknowledge my grief as my own - that it is as individual as I am- and will take shape in its own unique way.
- I **resolve** to be mindful of the need for flexibility when it comes to expectations of others and myself.
- I **resolve** not to be pressured by "shoulds."
- I **resolve** to cut myself slack when I am not as productive as I might like to be.
- I **resolve** to accept that others may not understand my pain, and it is probably not realistic to expect that of them. (Until one has walked the path, how can one know the terrain?)
- I **resolve** to express my feelings without guilt and not apologize for tears.
- I **resolve** to be grateful for concerned others who willingly just listen.
- I **resolve** to recognize that my acceptance of assistance and support of others allows them the blessing of giving.
- I **resolve** to forgive those who say or do that which feels hurtful, recognizing that unkindness is not intended.
- I **resolve** to extend myself the same grace and patience I would to others, were they in my situation.
- I **resolve** to find some little way each day to begin to reinvest in life, in an effort to move toward hope and a sense of purpose.
- I **resolve** to continue to speak my child's name, tell our stories, and embrace our memories.