



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July & August 2021

Newsletter

Volume 21 No.7 & 8

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

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.

*"As long as I can, I will look at this world
for both of us.*

As long as I can, I will laugh with the birds,

I will sing with the flowers,

I will pray to the stars for both of us."

-Sascha Wagner

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 Co-ordinator

Mary Lemley
203 483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

Monthly Meetings

Due to Governor Lamont's lessening of the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steering Committee of the Bridgeport/Stratford, TCF Chapter has decided to resume in-person meetings at Sterling House Community Center, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT06615 beginning in May 2021. Reservations for attending will need to be made. Social distancing and wearing a mask will be required. Information will be sent out to all members.

The in-person meetings will be televised **virtually on Zoom**. 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
(July 13, 2021 & August 10, 2021)

Time: 6:45 pm - 7:45 pm

Place: Sterling House & 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

Editor's Notes

Tidings of Peace are sent to you as we look forward to the harbingers of nature that tell us that the warmth of the sun is getting stronger and the rays of sunlight will be longer. One of those magnificent winged harbingers is the butterfly.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc. adopted the butterfly as one of its symbols. We see the butterfly in all its beauty on all of the covers of the national magazine *We Need Not Walk Alone* which is published four times a year. To us who are the compassionate friends, the butterfly is a sign of hope that our children are living in another dimension with greater beauty and freedom, and that we too may be able to build a new life after the death of our beloved children.

Since the early centuries of the Christian Church, the butterfly has symbolized the resurrection and life after death. The caterpillar signifies life here on earth, the cocoon-death, and the butterfly-the emergence of the dead into a new, beautiful and freer existence. Frequently, the butterfly is seen with the word "Nika," which means victory. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross movingly tells of seeing butterflies drawn all over the walls of the children's dormitories in the World War II concentration camps. Since Dr. Kubler-Ross believes in the innate intuitiveness of children, she concludes that these children knew their fate and were leaving us a message.

The butterfly is also a symbol of hope for those who are bereaved. Before a butterfly emerges, it must spend time in a cocoon. We might be tempted to help release the butterfly from her cocoon. It is human nature to want to assist, but if we do, she will fall to the ground and die. By her struggle to free herself, she strengthens her wings enough to survive and fly.

Grief is certainly like this process. We are in the depths of darkness and despair. We try to hide from others. We try to encapsulate ourselves by spinning a cocoon of isolation around ourselves while bathing ourselves in our own

tears. We are in this situation for a long time because this phase takes a long time.

Yet, we are different from the butterfly; others may help us in our struggle, and we soon learn that we need not do it all alone as the butterfly must. Even though, the ultimate responsibility is ours. We have to grieve, hurt, cry, be angry, and struggle to free ourselves from the cocoon of grief. And one day we do emerge-definitely changed but nevertheless a beautiful, stronger person who is a more compassionate person, a more understanding person.

Sue Monk Kidd in her book *When the Heart Waits* creates a vivid picture of this passage of emergence which I would like to share with you. She writes, "I raised my eyes to the pot of African violets. Sure enough, protruding above the rim was a wing-a startling black wing etched with blue and orange dots. It swayed back and forth. I rose to my feet, awe palpable in my chest. A butterfly! She was almost too glorious to look at. Her new black wings were unfurled against the emerald green of the plant-translucent, like two dark blades of moving light. The chrysalis had opened! For a long time I watched the butterfly with joy that was close to tears. She made no attempt to fly; she just sat on the potting soil, pumping with her wings. She seemed to be readying herself for her new life. As the light grew, she moved from one leaf to another until she was at the top of the plant. She perched there a moment; then she flew."

As bereaved parents, we must learn to be patient with ourselves and give ourselves the time we need. Yet, when we emerge from our chrysalis, we need to love our wings in memory and honor of our children.

*Taking one step at a time,
Claudia Margitay-Balogh*



GRIEVING, HEALING, GROWING ...

A Message From the
Compassionate Friend's
Founder

The Reverend Simon Stephens

Excerpted from Rev. Stephens' address at
the Tulsa, OK TCF Conference in 1987

..."I know that many of you are still in the valley of the shadow, and you still feel, I expect, very much alone. At times such as these, of course, it is difficult to catch a glimpse of the butterflies because darkness of the soul and mind can cloud our vision. It is difficult to be strong. It is difficult to be brave when others laugh and smile in the sunshine. It is difficult to be strong when your heart is unwell and truly broken: and when the love and light of your life has been rudely and sometimes violently eclipsed. But I believe that with each passing day, each helping hand, and each kind word, the darkness of the valley begins to surrender itself to the light of a new dawn.

Of course, as we know from our own experience, miracles rarely, if ever, happen overnight. And as we all know, there may be many false dawns to a new day.

In 1958 Simon Stephens of England was the sole survivor of a car accident which took the lives of his parents, sister, and brother. Unfortunately, this boy learned the tragic horror of sudden death and experienced the aftermath of grief. Because of this occurrence, when Simon was of age, he joined a religious order to be of service to others.

In 1968 serving as a hospital chaplain, Rev. Stephens joined two newly grieving sets of parents, and together they found solace sharing a similar experience by talking, listening, and being there for one another. From this one group other parents of a recently passed-on child joined until this circle continued to grow and grow until The Compassionate Friends in the UK

Important family anniversaries can plunge us into despair when the dawn, almost within our grasp, slips away. We find ourselves slipping back once again into our own personal darkness, and once again we begin the hard work of grieving.

But as The Compassionate Friends will tell you, in Australia, England, Canada, New Zealand, U.S.A., and South Africa, the nights really do get shorter. They really do. If you remain resolute to your course, then sooner or later, you will be rewarded with a glimpse of the sun as it rises over the valley's brim. And I suspect that in the peace of that early morning hour, you will see the butterflies dancing in the sun's rays and those butterflies, of course, are your children's love. But I can also promise you this, as founder of TCF, that very suddenly the darkness will lift from your mind and the weight will lift from your heart and you will behold your child in his or her newly found freedom of eternal love. and then, you will know, in your heart, that all is well...

It is my prayer and earnest hope that the love and the light which is The Compassionate Friends' gift to you will be a source of inspiration and courage to you in the months and years to come, for we need not walk alone. It is true, together we can make it, through the valley to the sun's rising.

God bless The Compassionate Friends everywhere. May He bless and protect you and all those you love, and may you always walk into the sunlight with your child at your side."

formally began in 1969.

In 1971 Reverend Simon Stephens took this concept to the state of Florida to spread the thought that survival is possible after the greatest of human tragedies indifferently crushes the human spirit after a child dies.

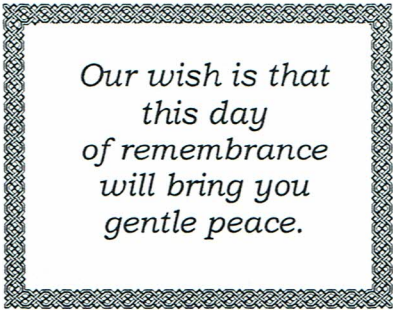
What is this motivation on the part of those who hurt so much because they love so much to reach out and offer hope to those they know not?

Perhaps it is the inspiration of the lives of those we love and not their deaths that is the special ingredient necessary for the miracle of survival to blossom from possibility to reality embodied in the service to others and the gratitude for the chance to do so.

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

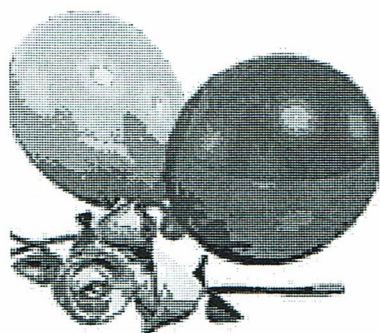
We all know how difficult these special days - Birthdays and Death Anniversaries - can be. This Feature in our newsletter helps us to be aware of who is facing these special days each month. We ask that you keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing such dates during July & August in your thoughts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

ANNA MARIA RINO	July 1	BARBARA YOUNG	August 2
KIM THIBODEAU CHIARALUCE	July 2	DAN O'SULLIVAN	August 3
ERIC S. HULTZBERG	July 4	ERIC ALLEN	August 3
CHRISTIAN LAWRENCE RUTTER	July 4	PAUL WILLIAM MINAR	August 5
MEGAN JANE ARSENAULT	July 4	BRIAN BELL	August 7
JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	July 6	ROBERT MANGANO	August 8
MICHAEL ESPACH	July 6	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 8
ERIN BABINEAU	July 12	THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.	August 8
JEREMIAH SHANNON SALVATORE	July 12	JAMES MEDVEGY (Jamie)	August 9
ALEXA RAE HERON	July 13	STEVEN C. BELENCHIA	August 9
JODI DAVIDOWSKI	July 14	PETER BRADFORD KOVACS	August 9
ADAM GARDNER	July 14	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 9
CHARLES ROBERT MARTIN	July 15	DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.	August 11
GINA DECHELLO	July 16	MICHELE BROADLEY	August 12
SOMMER LIEGH BOKINA	July 17	AVA JANE HOWERTON	August 12
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	JEREMY SAXE	August 13
RICHARD ELIOT BONOSKY	July 18	JOEY CLANCOLA	August 13
DANIEL QUIRK	July 19	KOREY JORDAN	August 13
FRANK ARGONESE	July 19	GEOFFREY GARDNER	August 13
MARCI BYITECK	July 21	ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN	August 15
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	BRANDON GIORDANO	August 17
Senior Airman LAWRENCE MANLAPIT III	July 21	ANTHONY MICHAEL TEIXEIRA	August 17
SEAN EAREL	July 23	DANIEL LAWRENCE TOOLE	August 18
MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI	July 23	CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.	August 18
BOBBY PROVENZANO	July 23	VICTORIA "TORI" LYNN KOETSCH	August 21
SCOTT McCLENATHAN	July 26	KATRELL BOHANNAN	August 22
LISA READ	July 30	KASANDRA SANDERS	August 22
		LORI ARGONESE	August 23
		AARON THOMAS HINE	August 25
		PETER RONALD RADZWILLAS	August 25
		DANNY STEIN	August 26
		JAMIE RITTER	August 27
		KEITH McCARTHY	August 27
		JOHN PATRICK FLANAGAN	August 27
		CHRISTOPHER PAPP	August 27
		BARBARA ANNE MINAR	August 27
		DIANA-ALEXANDRA BREAZ	August 28
		JASON WILLIAM CANNON	August 29
		TAMIKA CAMERON	August 29
		MICHAEL DAVID BUGLIONE	August 30



*Our wish is that
this day
of remembrance
will bring you
gentle peace.*

BIRTHDAYS



Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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

JOEL ALEXIS NIEVES	July 1	JENNIFER D. GUSTAFSON	August 1
MARISSA IRENE IRWIN	July 4	MARIA SKENDERIS ISOLA	August 1
KATIE FONTNEAU	July 4	SARAH FOLEY	August 3
KEVIN SUTHERLAND	July 4	AMANDA LYNN DAIGLE	August 5
WENDY JOAN CARPENTER	July 4	AARON HINE	August 6
FRED A. POPPA, JR.	July 5	EDWARD GLOVER	August 6
BETH LOGAN	July 8	MEGAN JANE ARSENAULT	August 6
SABINA ELIZABETH CECCARELLI	July 9	GREGORY HARTZ	August 7
GEOFFREY GARDNER	July 9	ALEX PAUL FAKHOURY	August 7
KEVIN MICHAEL KOCHAN	July 10	HERB GULLBERG IV	August 8
TONY BROWN	July 11	JOSEPH DAVID LONGO	August 8
DJ ART	July 12	NEIL GEORGE SWEETMAN	August 10
BRIAN STAPLETON	July 15	DENISE GLOVER	August 11
JOSEPH MICHAEL KLINKO	July 15	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 11
SHAUN DOWD	July 15	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 12
BRIAN MICHAEL CANCELLIERI	July 15	JAVIER DANIEL COSME	August 14
TEVIN GORDON	July 15	JESSICA BURROWS	August 16
ERIC A. JONES	July 16	JEFFREY YALE	August 17
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	JOSHUA GALPIN	August 18
ANGELINA JOY PEARSON	July 18	BRIAN BELL	August 21
SOMMER LIEIGH BOKINA	July 19	CARLO MINASI	August 22
STEFANA MONHOLLEN	July 20	LINDA MEDINA	August 25
ROBERT MANGANO	July 20	JODI DAVIDOWSKI	August 26
JAMES (TOMMY) STUART	July 20	MARGARITA B. RAMOS	August 28
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	PHILLIP DIVINCENZO JR.	August 28
SUSAN WOESSNER	July 22	JOLENE DECIUCIS	August 31
WILLIAM CLEARY	July 23	CHARLES BERSZAKIEWICZ	August 31
JON MALONE	July 29		
CHUCKIE ROTOLO	July 30		
BRIAN JAMES CHEPYA	July 30		

*"No matter how much time has passed,
I still feel your touch, see your light,
and will love you eternally."*



Angelversaries



Love Gifts



A "Love Gift" is a donation given in memory of our children by family or friends who wish to support the work of our chapter. There are no fees or dues to belong to The Compassionate Friends. All contributions are voluntary. Our Bridgeport & Vicinity Chapter depends solely on donations to fund our meetings. A Love Gift will help pay for expenses such as our website, meeting place, newsletter, telephone, Candle Lighting Event, books, brochures, and supplies which help 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.

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
c/o Leslie Minasi,
P.O. Box 112, Stratford, CT 06615
Please make out the check to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter.

Since the newsletter is published 6 times a year, please note that if you want to commemorate a birthday or anniversary in the exact month, **please send the love gift in advance.** All love gifts will be acknowledged as promptly as possible. The chapter leadership is grateful for your contributions of any amount.

Remembering
and
Honoring
the life of
Andrew Bobko
Miss You Always!
Love, Mom

The Rights of the Bereaved Independence Day

Independence Day is our country's anniversary as a free and independent nation. As Americans we have learned to exercise our rights that were so sorely earned, but what are the rights of the bereaved parent? Our freedom can sometimes be stifled by well meaning people.

As a Bereaved Parent you have a right to:

1. Miss your child, even after many years.
2. Talk about your child who died as you would your living children.
3. Cry when some small remembrance hits you like a brick.
4. Tell people how you really feel when they ask
5. Grieve in your own way and in your own time.
6. To be happy again!

Bereaved parents have a right to express their feelings of grief; to exercise their expressions of loss; to remember their loved one lived!

*So dear parents,
Claim your freedom to be you
and one day,
you will claim
your independence from grief!!!*

*-Nancy Cassell
TCF, Monmouth City, NJ*

TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

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

 Love Gift \$ _____ Thank you!

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF

THIS SUMMER

When you are grieving,

It Is Important To Relax And Take Time To Be Good To Yourself,

for grief takes an amazing amount of physical, emotional and spiritual energy. Following are some random thoughts that you may find helpful.

Get Outside As Often As Possible, Even If Only Into Your Back Yard.

The warmth of the sun, soft breezes against your skin, the scent of grass and flowers and the chirping of birds all fill your senses and help you feel better, more alive.

Exercise helps you work off anger, frustration. And depression. Brisk walking, bike riding and swimming are all great ways of reducing tension.

Try To Visit Places Where There Is Water.

Watching water and hearing it lap against the shore is soothing. As the waves recede, try to envision your grief receding; as the waves return, think of them as bringing peace and comfort.

Don't Push Your Grief Down.

Get it out into the open so you can deal with it and control it, or it will control you. A vacation, camping trip, or a re treat may be helpful. Make the vacation a restful, peaceful time and don't try to do too much.

Some Find That Keeping A Journal And Writing Down Their Thoughts And Feelings Is Very Helpful

Because grief work (working through the stages/phases of grief) is so demanding, eating balanced meals and getting adequate rest is extremely important.

You Might Try Attending A Group Support Meeting, Such As The Compassionate Friends.

You will gain helpful ideas on coping and meet those longer bereaved who have survived similar losses. The meetings can give you hope and the knowledge that you are not alone in your grief work.

TCF Sugarland, SW Houston, TX



DO IT YOUR WAY

I think it's only fair to tell you - there is no bereaved parent of the month award nor an award for the one with the stiffest upper lip. In fact, what you will find if you try to be the most stoic, brave and strong, the one doing too well, is instead of a reward, you suffer the consequences.

It is not possible to lose someone as vital as one's child and not have the pain or deep grief. You will find a great many non-bereaved people will encourage you to play the old, *"if you'll pretend your 're okay and it's really not so bad we'll let you come play with us but if you're going to cry and talk about your dead child then you can't play the game."*

This is one time in your life you don't have to meet anybody else's standards. There is nothing more unique about you than the way you express your grief - and you have that right, however it is manifested. A great deal of how you go about it is determined by how you have handled previous problems.

So, if someone tries to influence you to play the old game of rewarding you with attention because "you are doing well," tell them you're not doing well, that your child has died and you're hurting. Let them know it doesn't help you to pretend everything is okay. Do whatever it is you need to do to survive this trauma and don't worry about whether it pleases or displeases other people.

Mary Cleckley, TCF, Atlanta, GA

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Compassionate Friends 2021 Virtual National Conference July 16-18, 2021

The Compassionate Friends' 2021 National Conference was scheduled to be held in Detroit, Michigan this July. The Board of Directors had been actively watching national developments and considering the many issues that were involved for determining how to proceed. Even now when the Coronavirus pandemic's strict restrictions have been loosened for large gatherings, the in-person conference in Detroit will not take place.

The Board recognizes how disappointing this may be to the many members in our TCF family as it is to all of the staff and Board of Directors. A lot of thought and consideration was given to this decision, and a number of factors were evaluated before making a final determination.

The most important consideration during the spring was whether an in-person conference could ensure the safety of our members with the continuing risks and uncertainty of travel and group gatherings. Limitations within the hotel as well as Michigan's fluctuating mandates made this year's in-person conference an impossibility.

When National canceled last year's conference for the first in 43 years, a virtual conference was created. With the support of many TCF volunteers working alongside TCF staff and the TCF Board of Directors, a very successful experience occurred.

Over 1,000 participants who needed support attended last year and had an opportunity for

connection. Taking all that was learned, this year's virtual conference staff will build on last year's experience to ensure another successful virtual conference.

We share your disappointment that more time will be needed before we can come together in-person again.

All information for TCF's three-day virtual conference including the number of sessions, registration prices, and earlybird prices are posted on National's website.

Your Bridgeport/Stratford chapter will reimburse three of our members for their registration fee to the virtual conference. If you are interested, please contact our treasurer Leslie Minasi at our website as soon as possible.

contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Comments from the 2020 Virtual Conference
"The Conference meant so much to me. It was beautifully presented. I will always be grateful that I was able to attend." - 2020 Virtual Conference Attendee

"I am very grateful for all your hard work putting together such an amazing 3 day event. I am newly bereaved and this conference was that ray of sunshine that I needed. The Compassionate Friends conference has given me tools that I didn't even know I needed to help me ease some of this pain in my heart." - 2020 Virtual Attendee

*"Those we love remain with us, for love itself lives on.
and cherished memories never fade because a loved one is gone.
Those we love can never be more than a thought apart,
for as long as there is memory, he or she will live on in the heart."
-anonymous*