



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

January & February 2022

Newsletter

Volume 22 No.1 & 2

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.

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.

"When we need these healing times, there is nothing better than a good long walk. It is amazing how the rhythmic movements of the feet and the legs are so intimately attached to cobweb cleaners in the brain."

-Anne Wilson Schaefer

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

As we continue through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steering Committee of our chapter will monitor the situation. Presently, we will continue to have **in-person meetings at the Sterling House Community Center, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT06615.** On-line reservations for attending the meeting will need to be made. Social distancing and wearing a mask throughout the meeting will be required. **The in-person meetings will no longer be televised virtually on Zoom due to inadequate attendance.**

Date: Second Tuesday of each month

January 11, 2022 & February 8, 2022

Time: 6:45 pm - 8:45 pm

Place: Sterling House

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

**** If there is no school in Stratford due to inclement weather, there is no meeting because Sterling House is closed.**

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 embark on the journey that 2022 will present to us. This embarkation begins on New Year's Eve when parties are planned and community gatherings are organized. The agenda is to celebrate with friends, food, libations, confetti, noise-makers, and resolutions. Usually, most folks look forward to the new year since it can represent a new beginning and/or a chance to "do better" than in the previous twelve months.

We, as grieving parents, may have a much different take on the New Year. It may be very hard to conjure up energy and joy about the approaching year. It is probably hurtful at times when the media and others encourage us to have a **HAPPY** New Year!

Our immediate responses may be: "What do I have to be happy about?" "How can I possibly look forward to a new year without the presence of my beloved child?" "What makes anyone think I have the extra energy to resolve to stop a bad habit or initiate a new more positive behavior?"

Our child has died, our heart feels broken, our grief process is overwhelming, and we struggle daily with the draining emotion of sadness. No wonder we do not feel hopeful about the future.

When we are hurting and so terribly distressed, it is hard to see any good in the New Year...but we must try. First, we must hold on tightly to the idea that we will not always be this miserable - that we will someday feel better and then someday feel good again. This is almost impossible to believe, but even if we do not believe it, we must tell ourselves over and over again that it is true....because it is! Many parents whose children have died in the past will attest to this. Furthermore, we must face the New Year with the knowledge that this year offers us a **CHOICE**...whether we will be on our way to healing this time next year or still be in the pit of intense grief. We must remind ourselves that if we choose to be on our way to healing by the following year, we must work to get there, and that work entails allowing ourselves to go through our grief by crying, getting angry, talking about our guilt, or doing whatever is necessary to move towards healing.

Moreover, we must look for good in our lives and find reasons to go on and accept the fact that our continued suffering will not bring our child back. Many

have other children and a spouse for whom they must go on. More importantly, we have our own lives that must be lived. Most of us know that our deceased children would want us to go on. Many of us understand that it is imperative for us to live valuable lives in honor of our children.

No, this coming year may not be a happy one, but it can be a constructive one. Through our grief we can grow and become more understanding, loving, compassionate, and aware of the real values in life.

So with that in mind, I send my best wishes for the New Year.

To the newly bereaved, I wish you patience-patience with yourself in the painful week, months, even years ahead.

To the bereaved siblings, I wish you and your parents a new understanding of each others' needs and the beginnings of good communication.

To those of you who are single parents, I wish you the inner resources that you will need to cope, often alone with your loss.

To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child, I wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

To those of you who have suffered the death of more than one child, I wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or all of your children, I offer you my eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

To those of you who are plagued with guilt, I wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances.

To all fathers and those unable to cry, I wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief.

To those of you who are exhausted from grieving, I wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

To all others with special needs that I have not mentioned, I wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.

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

Grieving, Healing, Growing...

JANUARY was held to be sacred by the ancient Romans who adopted January as the first month of the year in 251 B.C. Janus was sometimes represented as "a porter or keeper," with a scepter in one hand and a key in the other. The most commonly known representation is that on the early Roman coinage with Janus depicted as a Godhead with two faces: One looking toward the future, the other viewing the past, the dispenser of the fortunes of mankind.



The commencement of the year, month, and day were regarded as sacred to Janus, considered to be the supreme God who opened and closed the gates of heaven to make day and night.

For those of us who have lost our children, it is very difficult to achieve a peace which allows us, like Janus, to look forward and back. The time with our deceased children is behind us, and we look back to the memories of them, and forward, sometimes unwillingly, to the life we now have without their physical presence.

In our current culture, the end and the beginning of the year is still a time to look at our lives and discard detrimental patterns with new resolutions for the future in which we hope to improve our lives. There is great disagreement in the studies of expert theologians and philosophers as to the origins of our thoughts and our beliefs, but we all agree that we must plan our unknown futures from such unknown lessons as we can derive from the experiences of our past.

Thus we do look both forward and backward at all times, and by common agreement in many cultures, we end the old year, keep its ventures, and in January give thought to the year upon which we embark with hope that we can use our experience to enable us to live a little more successfully.

In the grief process, it seems that there is little choice as to whether we deal with grief or not. We simply have it, an unwanted disaster, which we are forced to accept and deal with as an essential step toward recovery and the rest of our lives. Each of us works somewhat differently in the effort to achieve a new order in life and a peaceful, productive existence. We find few who can advise us, and we are hesitant when we advise each other.

As a bereaved parent, we will always be somewhat like the Roman representation of Janus. We will always look back to a happier time in our lives, and life will always require that we look forward to that life remaining and those

things not yet accomplished, and both good and bad times waiting in the unknown future.

Most of us accept the fact that we have some things forced upon us and that life has some choices we can make and influence. Our theologians frequently discuss the will of GOD, and we do not always agree. We certainly cannot, after the death of a child, find it easy to believe that an omnipotent GOD chose to destroy a portion of our life; we cannot find any good in disastrous events, and we cannot believe that GOD chose to inflict continuing sorrow on our families. If we believed that, I think we might then be permanently angry with an unfair GOD. That result would be most detrimental to us and most unfair to our image of GOD as our Father figure.

Janus was the "Father" figure to the ancient Romans. They perceived him as fully capable of looking back and looking forward. There is no difference of emphasis in the faces of Janus, no weighted image that makes the past either more or less important than the future.

Bereaved parents have the problem of achieving balance. For a time we relive the past with such intensity that we have little face to look toward the future. Most of us believe that we do not fully know the will of God. We do know more about the will of man. Without the will to look toward the future, we can become too much absorbed in our emphasis upon the past. Grief recovery requires a positive decision to put our past in perspective, and in balance, to enable us to deal with the future coherently. Where we cannot fully fathom the will of GOD, we can understand that we must try to will ourselves to deal with, to accept the adverse circumstances, and to work toward a balance of perspective which will put at least equal importance on the future.

The past, and our loss, will always be a part of us. How we "accept the unacceptable" in the words of one lecturer will determine the quality of our future existence.

I do not think it would be pagan if we reflected in January upon the two faces of Janus and the two aspects of life represented. Each of us can privately determine the balance we hope to achieve between past and future, and each of us can determine what we will need to apply to achieve a balanced recovery from the detrimental aspects of devastating grief. In our reading, we find a concept in much theology that GOD puts a great deal of emphasis on the will of man. In the world as most of us know it, GOD's will is personified through man. It is then our task to will us forward - through grief - to a recovery. To paraphrase the late Mary Brown, you alone can do it, but you cannot do it alone.

To each of you, in your struggle toward acceptance and recovery from loss, we wish for you the will to recover. As Compassionate Friends we will help all that we can and as we can, for we know that:

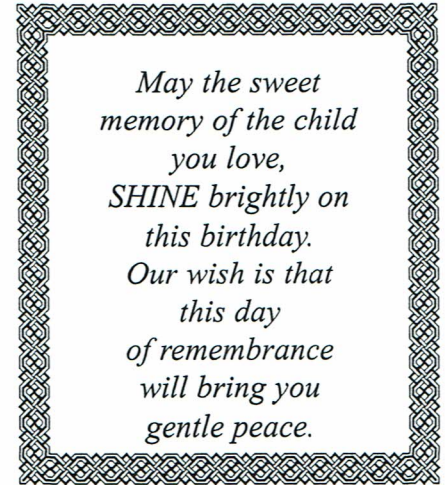
COMPASSION IS NOT PITY THAT LOOKS DOWN.
IT IS LOVE THAT SHARES AND DIVIDES THE
POIGNANCY OF PAIN. (Anonymous)

By Dayton Robinson
Tuscaloosa, Alabama TCF Chapter News Letter

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
KAYLENE CERCONI	January 10
FRED A. POPPA, JR.	January 11
JOHN NAPOLITANO	January 11
MARISSA IRENE IRWIN	January 11
DENISE GLOVER	January 13
CIARA O'DRISCOLL	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
KEVIN KUCZO	January 21
JOSHUA R. EHMAN	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



BIRTHDAYS

BRENNA MCMENAMEY	February 5
KAREN WIEGMAN	February 7
BRENDAN THOMAS MURREN	February 7
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	MICHELLE PETERS	January 16
KENNETH (KJ) A. BARTEK, JR.	January 4	GINA DECHELLO	January 16
BRIAN JOHN LILLY, JR.	January 4	CIARA O'DRISCOLL	January 16
JOHN SCINTO	January 6	ADAM JARVIS	January 17
ROBERT SMUNIEWSKI	January 8	JULIAN CERRATO	January 19
DENISE PIETROWSKI	January 9	JASON WALOWITZ	January 19
SCOTT MILO	January 11	ALAN BARNETT WEINER	January 20
KEVONNA EDWARDS	January 12	WILLIAM MARIANO VARGAS	January 22
JAMES CARBONE	January 12	JESSICA ELIZABETH KOLARIC	January 26
BRENDAN THOMAS MURREN	January 12	VICTOR MARELLA, JR.	January 27
BRIA MARIE McCONNELL VILLANUEVA	January 14	JAMES HRZIC	January 27
STEPHEN D. TOMASKY	January 15	JONAS BLACKWELL	January 29
		OZZY ZACK	January 30
		STEPHEN M. CESLIK, III	January 30
		GEORGE W. JULESON, IV	January 31
		WILLIAM (BILLY) RUDOLPH	January 31
JAMIE RITTER	February 2		
DEBRA NAPOLITANO	February 4		
KRISTIN ANN CARVETH	February 4		
MASHA ROBINSON	February 4		
KEVIN KUCZO	February 4		
AMBER KINGERSKY	February 5		
CHARLES ANTHONY CURCIO	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		
CHRISTA JOENELL LUTTMANN	February 10 or 11?		
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

"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.

Please send your check to:

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.

Once again during the month of December, a donation from our treasury was given to Sterling House Community Center in appreciation for allowing our chapter to hold our monthly meetings in their auditorium. This year's donation will be used to purchase food for Sterling House's Food Pantry.

Happy Birthday

**Sean
Garrett
Rice**

Love Always,
Mom

Compassionate Verse

Wintersun

*There are those days in winter
when your world is frozen
into a vision of eternal ice,
when earth and air
are strangers to each other,
when sound and color seem forever gone.*

*There are those days in winter
when you feel like dying,
when life itself surrenders you to anguish,
to total mourning and to endless grief.*

*And then it happens: from the bitter sky,
a timid sun strides to his silent battle
against the gray and hostile universe -
it changes ice to roses, sky to song.*

*And then it happens that your heart recalls
some distant joy, a gladness from the past.
A slender light at first, then larger, braver,
until your mind returns to hope and peace.*

*Let memories be beauty in your life,
like song and roses in the wintersun.*

by: Sasha Wagner

On Sunday, December 12, 2021, our chapter held its annual Candle Lighting Memorial Event outdoors at the Paradise Green Gazebo in Stratford, CT. Those in attendance lit their candle when the name of their child or loved one's name was read. Photos of the children and loved ones were projected on a screen for all to see.

Chapter members Julie and Rob McClenathan graced the service with their musical talent. Julie sang three songs: Alan Pedersen's "Tonight I Hold This Candle," Alison Krauss' "Get Me Through December," and Enya's "If I Could Be Where You Are." All three songs can be heard on UTube and their lyrics downloaded.

As a remembrance token, a crystal angel, which was made by Holly Konstantino in memory of her daughter Kadeelyn, was given to each family.

?QUESTIONING?&!ANSWERING!!

WHERE ARE YOU?

by Harold Hopkins

I missed you yesterday and looked for you
among the artifacts of your life -
your room with pictures,
the clothes that still carried your scent,
your favorite tools and books, the tapes you loved to hear.

The very walls echoed your vitality
and carried faint memories of riotous laughter.

And so I sat there, comforted for a while,
but forced at last to confess

that although beautiful memories lingered
you were not there, not then, and not ever again.

If I could not find you yesterday,
where, then, can I look today?

Who can I talk to, implore, beg to show me the way?

Where are the hidden doorways
to the signs and wonders others claim to see?

My musings bring no answers,
so I take a walk to clear my mind.

Ahead, I see children playing,
and their laughter floating on the wind
reminds me of your own carefree approach to life.

Their running mirrors your own abandon
and the way you always found joy in simple things.

Can this be the answer to the riddle of finding you again?
Can it be that I will hear you in every moment of laughter?

That I will see you

in the actions of a mischievous friend?

That I will feel you in every touch of compassion?

I've always heard that if you seek, you will find.

Perhaps the corollary to that is that
you must seek in the right places.

I've been looking in the scrapbook
of all that used to be and found only momentary solace.

So let me look for you anew
in all the wonders and blessings of life.

I believe you are reflected
there with every expression of happiness and joy,
in every instance of fearless exploration,
and with every act of unconditional love.

in loving memory of Lance Porter Hopkins

July 20, 1975 - November 30, 1999

TCF Lawrenceville, GA January 2001

The Promise

by Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

Your birth bought me star-shine,
the moon and the sun;
my wishes, dreams gather
'round my little one.

My life became sacred,
full of promise and light
all wrapped in the child
who brought love at first sight.

The years of your living
filled with laughter and tears,
excitement, adventure,
some boredom, some fears,
but ended too quickly,
ahead of its time.

The loss so horrendous
such heartbreak was mine.

But from the beginning,
one thought rose so clear;
never would your death erase
the years that you were here.

I would not be defeated
or diminished by your death;
I would hang on, learn to conquer,
if it took my every breath.

For if your death destroyed my life,
made both our lives a waste,
't would deny your life's meaning
and all the love you gave.

I vowed that years of sadness
would change, with work and grace,
to years of happiness, even joy,
in which you'd have a place.

Memories of you, like shining stars
in the patterns of my soul,
are beacons flashing light and love,
and with them I am whole.

In your honor, I live my life,
now living it for two.

Through all my life, you too will live.
You lived, you live, you do.

From We Need Not Walk Alone
Winter 2005-06

New Year Hopes and Wishes for All Who Are Bereaved



TO THE NEWLY BEREAVED, we wish you patience-patience with yourselves in the painful week, months, and the years ahead.

TO THE BEREAVED SIBLINGS, we wish you and your parents a new understanding of each others needs and the beginnings of good communication.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE SINGLE PARENTS, we wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone, with your loss.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE PLAGUED WITH GUILT, we wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances and that your child knew that.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE SUFFERED MULTIPLE LOSSES, those who have experienced the death of more than one child-we wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE DEEPLY DEPRESSED, we wish you the first steps out of the "valley of the shadow."

TO THOSE EXPERIENCING MARITAL DIFFICULTIES AFTER THE DEATH OF YOUR CHILD, we wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other.

TO ALL THE FATHERS, we wish you the ability to express your grief, to move beyond society's conditioning, to cry.

TO THOSE WITH FEW OR NO MEMORIES OF YOUR CHILD, perhaps because you suffered through a stillbirth, a miscarriage, or infant death, we wish you the sure knowledge that your child is a person and that your grief is real.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED THE DEATH OF AN ONLY CHILD OR OF ALL YOUR CHILDREN, we offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE UNABLE TO CRY, we wish you healing tears.

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE TIRED, EXHAUSTED FROM GRIEVING, we wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day.

TO ALL OTHER WITH SPECIAL NEED THAT WE HAVE NOT MENTIONED, we wish you the understanding you need and the assurance that you are loved.