



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March & April 2023

Newsletter

Volume 23 No.3 & 4

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.

*"I knew that ... the full acceptance of the finality of loss, and all the pain that goes with it, need not diminish life but could give it a new quality of fulfillment. I also knew that this could not be achieved without going through the agonies of grief and mourning."
-Lily Pincus*

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

When: Meetings are held on the **SECOND TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH** year round. **If the Stratford School system lets the children out early or if school is closed due to inclement weather, Sterling House will be closed, and the meeting for the month will be cancelled.**

Our next two meetings will be held on:

March 14, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm

April 11, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm

**Where: Sterling House Community Center
2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06614**

DIRECTIONS:

Take 1-95 North from Bridgeport. Get off Exit 32 West Broad Street. At the end of ramp, go straight to the second traffic light which is Main Street. Turn left. Sterling House Community Center is a Victorian Brick House. It will be on the opposite side of the street. Park in Sterling House's parking lot. Use back entrance. We meet in the large room. Phone: 203 378-2606
Please bring a canned good or nonperishable food item to the meeting for Sterling House's Food Pantry.

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

Zoom Co-ordinator

Kristen Cable

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso

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

CONTACT NUMBER: 475-882-9695

Grieving, Healing, Growing...

Bread Crumbs: Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have. They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is a little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice--a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

"Thanks for everything, Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say, and I never took anything for granted. I had the best childhood anyone could have. Thanks for the ideas & opportunities I grew up with. I love you. Mark"

I call these things crumbs because they are disappointing pieces of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have. I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest--to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them. I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our own way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest--but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found. Maybe you'll find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow" doesn't come.

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently--and I believe better than the person that entered that awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the "perfect life" or do

what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around--from a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of "what is in it for me?" to "how can I help you?" We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand-name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love. We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, while at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to be anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We did not ask for it. But we got it anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: "Could you please go over?" We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?," his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy. He broke his bike." "But Honey, you don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know, Mom, but I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look her in the eye, and say, "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person, we help ourselves heal, too.

So what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? (1) *New priorities.* (2) *A new sense of self* (3) *The ability to help someone else.*

These are definitely good things. They did not come from the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "There is no silver lining." But there is change. These changes come after the death when we recognize that we can not change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay, Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of 3 instead of 4, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief, marked our turning point.

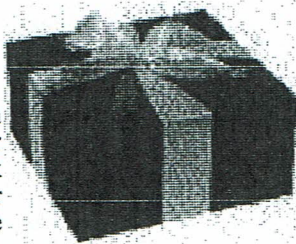
My wife has a recurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now, and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "tell me everything you did after I died." On that day she will be proud to answer, "I lived the rest of my life one third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in Stage Two we do in our child's name. And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever.

And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

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.

In Memory
of our beloved son
Jon Simko
with love,
Mom & Dad

DAWN KOSARKO
Always with us
and
Forever loved!
Mom & Dad



Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

You Are Missed Every Second of the Day!

They say there is a reason,
They say that time will heal,
But neither time nor reason
Will change the way I feel.
For no one knows the heartache,
That lies behind my smiles.
No one knows how many times,
I have broken down and cried.
**I want to tell you something
So there won't be any doubt.**
You are so wonderful to think of,
But so hard to live without.

Full Circle

*Find a little time for spring,
even if your days are troubled.
Let a little sunshine in -
let your memories be doubled.
Take a little time to see
all the things your child was seeing -
and your tears will help your heart
find a better time for being.*
-Sascha Wagner

*This mother of two deceased children was honored
with The Compassionate Friends Professional
Service Award in recognition of her widespread
support and understanding her writing has provided
to grieving parents and their families.*

TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Message _____

Love Gift \$ _____

Thank you!

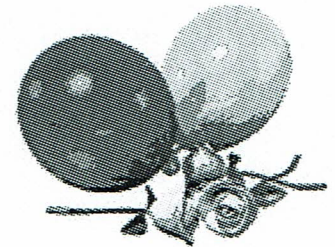
Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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 March and April in your thoughts and in your hearts.

BOSTON GRIMM STIBEL	March 1
MILES JON JENNESS	March 1
ANGEL GRACE McMANUS	March 1
WILLIAM (BILLY) RUDOLPH	March 1
JOSEPH DAVID LONGO	March 3
BRANDON SEAN LYNCH	March 4
MATTHEW MAKAR	March 5
LINDA POPPA	March 6
STEVEN SPRAY	March 6
PARKER LILY KOLTCHAK	March 6
JOSEPH MINNIX	March 7
BETH LOGAN	March 7
PAUL STEVEN KEELER	March 7
SHERRI A. MUNZ	March 8
KEVIN MICHAEL KOCHAN	March 8
TONY BROWN	March 9
BRIDGET GRACE CABLE	March 9
DEIDRE STEWART	March 10
JOVANNI NATAL	March 10
NANCY P. KELLER	March 11
CHRISTA JOENELL LUTTMANN	March 12
MATTHEW PERRY	March 17
MICHAEL ROE	March 17
JOAN P. BURBY TELLONE	March 17
JOHN E. MURPHY, JR	March 18
GREGORY HARTZ	March 19
JESSICA ELIZABETH KOLARIC	March 21
CRISTIANO MATEUS CABASE	March 21
THOMAS PATRICK DALLING	March 22
WILLIAM (BILLY) A. SLOSSAR	March 22
OZZY ZACK	March 23
CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH HALEY	March 24
DAVID MICHAEL VOGT	March 24
XAVIER HUNTER SANDOR	March 26
MARISSA NICOLE ARGUETA	March 27
JOHNNY CORSA	March 27
MELISSA STUPAK MONTUORI	March 29
BABY OTT	March 31
AMY ELIZABETH CLEVELAND - JOHNSON	April 3
MARC ROSEN	April 3
RYAN THOMAS WALSH	April 3
JALYN FRANCIS	April 4
CHARLIE BERSZAKIEWICZ	April 6
KEVIN SUTHERLAND	April 8
MICHAEL JOSEPH HURTA	April 9
CHRISTINE ANN SOLTIS FILAKOVSKY	April 9
SCOTT MILO	April 11

*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.*

Birthdays



BRIAN JOHN LILLY JR.	April 12
COREY MICHAEL CERRONE	April 13
JAKE PANUS	April 13
SETH ROBERTS	April 15
AMBER PHILLIPS	April 16
JOSHUA GALPIN	April 19
SCOTTY THOMAS	April 23
JOLENE DeCIUCIS	April 23
NICK FELISKO	April 24
JUSTIN SMITH	April 24
ANTONIO GONCALVES	April 25
ERIC A. JONES	April 25
TATE ARLETTA SCHEER	April 25
MICHAEL PATRICK GIANOLA	April 26
LEIGH SABO	April 28

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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

JASON WILLIAM CANNON	March 1	DAWN ANN KALMAN	March 27
ROY H. SMITH, JR	March 1	JIMMY PIFER	March 27
ANGEL GRACE McMANUS	March 1	DIANA-ALEXANDRA BREAZ	March 28
GRACE MARIE EVANKO	March 2	COREY MICHAEL CERRONE	March 29
JOHN NAPOLITANO	March 3	TIMMY GAROFALO	March 30
KAREN WIEGMAN	March 4	CHRISTOPHER McETTRICK	March 30
MICHAEL JAMES JR	March 4		
LEO FARRELL	March 6		
CHARLES PATAKY	March 8	DAVID STANCZYK	April 1
BRANDON GIORDANO	March 9	BOBBY PROVENZANO	April 1
CHRISTIE LEA ENDRE	March 10	DAN O'SULLIVAN	April 2
RYAN PHILLIPS	March 12	WILLIAM J. SAVO	April 4
JOSEPH MCFADDEN	March 13	JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	April 4
CHRISTOPHER TOKARSKI, JR	March 13	DANIEL SOUZA	April 4
ALEX RECUPINO	March 14	FRANK ARGONESE	April 5
JAMES (JAMEY) GUENTHER DINA	March 14	ANNETTE KEMEZA	April 7
RYAN EDWARD SIMPSON	March 14	PAOLO GUEVERA	April 7
VICTORIA "TORI" LYNN KOETSCH	March 16	JOHN SAMUEL SMITH	April 9
JERESA JUNE MINCEY	March 17	JOSEPH F. MINNIX	April 10
JARED ARTHUR LEVINE	March 17	AUSTIN BUONI	April 12
ERIK JASON DOBYNS	March 17	XAVIER HUNTER SANDOR	April 15
BERNARD E. KOETSCH II	March 18	THOMAS REDGATE	April 18
THOMAS VAZZANO	March 18	JENNIFER McLEOD	April 20
DAWN KOSARKO	March 18	GARY SALVATORE BELLARD	April 21
BRIAN TUZIK	March 19	ANDREW BOBKO	April 23
ERIC ALLEN	March 19	MARCUS RAMOS	April 24
JOSHUA R. WRIGHT	March 19	AALIYAH GABRIELLE DUNN	April 24
TAMIKA CAMERON	March 20	SCOTTY THOMAS	April 24
BRANDON SEAN LYNCH	March 21	CHRISTOPHER R. ETES	April 24
LAURIE POVINELLI	March 21	WILLIAM A. BAKER IV	April 26
CARL R. WENNERSTRAND TALBOT	March 21	LYNETTE DANIEL SWANSON	April 26
JOHN STEMPERT	March 21	JOHN McPADDEN	April 27
KEITH DRAP	March 23	THOMAS JOHN LEE	April 28
KIM THIBODEAU CHIARALUCE	March 26	ADAM GARDNER	April 29
JENOE VARGA	March 26		
MICHAEL ROWLEY	March 27		

Angelversaries

Compassionate Wisdom

The Journey

There once was an old man who journeyed back to his hometown with the intent of reminiscing about the good times, as well as the sorrows he experienced as a young father. High on the list of places he wanted to visit was the elementary school his daughter had attended.

First, he would walk around the huge playground where he had so often brought his daughter to play. He would stop at the slide, then the swings, and finally the monkey bars, remembering the joy on his daughter's face as she moved happy and carefree from one adventure to another.

Then, he would enter the school building. His first stop would be the kindergarten room. He could still see in his mind that memorable day almost 50 years before, his daughter's outstretched hand enclosed in his firm, yet tender grip. As they searched for her classroom, their loving touch finally ended as she walked through the open door to a new stage in her life.

The old man's next stop would be the tiny gymnasium where his daughter performed in the holiday pageant. How beautiful she appeared, dressed in soft white as she sang "Silent Night, Holy Night."

Finally, he would stop at her third grade classroom. The old man remembered clearly the day he and his wife had stood outside the closed classroom door, tears streaming down their cheeks. Finally, gathering their courage, they entered the room to comfort and talk with their daughter's classmates who, as yet, failed to comprehend why they would never again see alive the little girl they all considered their best friend.

The anticipation grew strong as he neared the street where the school stood.

Arriving at the spot, the old man wept at what he saw. The plain white concrete structure he expected was no longer there - a sleek modern building stood in its place. An asphalt parking lot covered the old grassy playground.

Understanding that he would never be able to fulfill his mission, the old man started thinking about the transient nature of life - how nothing ever remains the same. communities change. buildings are here today, gone tomorrow. Loved ones live - and die. Even nations rise and fall.

But then, the old man had another thought. The love his daughter had passed on to him still remained within his heart - 46 years after she had died.

He realized that it didn't matter if a day, a year, a decade, or a century were to pass. The candle of love would continue to burn bright in his heart. And he thought how even an eternity from now the love he still carried for his daughter would have transcended his own death and been returned to her a thousand fold.

The old man turned his car around to head toward the highway. Taking one last glance in the rear view mirror at the new school, he understood that memories live on, not because of a building or a classroom or a playground. They remain alive inside us because love outlasts even the sands of time. A smile crossed his lips. **His mission had been completed.**

written by Wayne Loder
Kansas City, MO TCF Chapter