



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

November & December 2023      Newsletter      Volume 23 No.11&12

*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.

*May the sun bring you new energy by day.  
May the moon softly restore you by night.  
May the rain wash away your sadness.  
May the breeze blow new strength into your being  
and May you walk gently through your journey  
with compassionate grace.*

**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  
60 Tyrone Place  
Stratford, CT06614**

**National Office Address**  
The Compassionate Friends  
48660 Pontiac Trail #930805  
Wixom, MI 48393  
(630)990-0010 (877)969-0010  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Regional Co-ordinator**  
Mary Lemley  
203 483-9935  
[Mklem43@aol.com](mailto: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:**

**November 14, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm**

**December 12, 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](mailto:contact@tcf-bridgeport.org)**

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:

**[www.tcf-bridgeport.org](http://www.tcf-bridgeport.org)**

**Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:**

**[www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter](http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter)**

**CONTACT NUMBER: 475-882-9695**

# Grieving... Healing... Growing...

## GRIEF BRAIN "What's Going On?"

After the death of our child, we may experience many changes in our mental and emotional state of mind. We may find ourselves simply in a daze, unable to focus, or going aimlessly in circles at times.

Completing routine or simple tasks may seem overwhelming or impossible and may take longer. The efficient way we juggled work and home prior to the death of our child has suddenly disappeared, along with our good coping skills and ability to manage stress. We may have been excellent at balancing our checkbook, but now we can't add one plus one. We miss due dates on bills or discover we have paid a bill twice. Where once we could have done most things blindfolded or with a hand tied behind our back, we realize that this is no longer true.

Now it seems we may go days without doing a thing; even though we had multiple items we "planned" to do. We find ourselves getting lost while driving to familiar places or arriving and wondering "how did I get here?" We might forget appointments, scheduled activities, or familiar names. We may misplace our cell phone, wallet, glasses, or keys more often, only to find items in unlikely places (aluminum foil in the refrigerator, TV remote in the kitchen cupboard). Our judgment may seem clouded when making routine decisions. These are symptoms of Grief Brain, but we should not worry that there is something permanently wrong with our brain. Grief Brain is a natural part of the grieving process. Our brain is on overload with thoughts of sorrow, sadness, loneliness, and many other feelings. Grief Brain affects our memory, concentration, and cognition. Our brain is focused on the feelings and symptoms of grief which leaves little room for every-

day tasks.

It is so important to be gentle and patient with yourself. It may be unreasonable or impossible to expect to complete our normal tasks as we did before our child died. We must be mindful about setting reasonable expectations and build from there. When we can complete a task, we need to give ourselves a pat on the back and recognize it as a step towards healing.

To help ourselves focus, we could write reminders down on a legal pad or tablet and keep it on a nearby table where we can readily refer to it. Sticky notes may not be a helpful resource as they can lose their stickiness and get misplaced.

We need to ask for help when needed. We must remember those friends who genuinely want to do something for us. It is up to us to tell them of our Grief Brain symptoms and let them know what they can do.

In order for our brain to rest and relax while we grieve, we need to get plenty of rest, recite positive affirmations, and journal. Journaling is an excellent form of therapy which will help release the many feelings we are experiencing.

If we are diligent about learning how grief affects our body, mind, and spirit as well as realizing the grief work that we need to do, we can begin to heal. As we heal, we will find that our thinking is clearer/sharper and our judgment becomes more reliable, and we can accomplish what we once were able to do.

It is always important to take our time, baby steps as they say, to slow down, and to be kind and compassionate to ourselves.

by: *Tensie Holland, LSW, CT*

# 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 request and check to our treasurer at our new address.**

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter  
c/o Leslie Minasi, (Treasurer)  
74 Cedar Hill Road  
Easton, CT 06612

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  
**Justin Joseph Margitay-Balogh**  
With love,  
Mrs. Irene Kostzewski

## Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

Dear Society:

Please be kind to those with a broken heart this holiday season. Please understand that they are doing the best that they can. Please remember that there is no time-frame for grief. Grief - in one form or another - will always be felt. Please know that for some, this is the absolute most difficult time of the year. The depth of their pain is bursting at the seams.

Please be empathetic, caring, and nonjudgmental. Please think about how you would feel if your everything was no longer here. Please extend a hand, a hug, and some love.

Please know that we may need you now more than ever before. Please know that you cannot heal our grief or our broken hearts. Nor do we want you to. Please respect our wishes, and always offer us another invitation even if we were unable to attend. Please know that we are not jealous of your joy, but seeing others happy can be a devastating reminder of the pronounced void that now exists.

Please love us through our pain and above all else, please say their name!

**Grief** breaks our hearts  
but also bonds us to other hurting souls  
who are swimming in the pain of loss, too.

And who are weathering  
the storms and the changes  
we find ourselves going through.  
**Grief** brings people into our lives  
through a common thread of suffering,  
which may be the only warmth  
we feel in an isolating  
season of mourning.

-Liz Newman

# 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 November and December in your thoughts and in your hearts.

EDWARD ANGELO PIPKIN	November 2	ALEXANDER J. ("AJ") AGUILAR	December 2
DERICK JAMES SPRINGER	November 2	DANIEL HOWIE MARTINEZ, JR.	December 3
ZOE ELIZABETH ANYAN	November 3	KEVONNA EDWARDS	December 3
KRISTIN ANN CARVETH	November 4	CARLO MINASI	December 3
EDWARD GLOVER	November 4	BEVERLY BRUNO	December 4
JAMES (JAMEY) GUENTHER DINA	November 5	DAWN ANN KALMAN	December 4
JULIAN CERRATO	November 8	MICHAEL ROWLEY	December 4
KEITH RONALD BERRY	November 9	LEO FARRELL	December 7
DAVID L. CARLSON	November 9	STEVEN WALL	December 9
PHILLIP DIVINCENZO, JR.	November 9	EVAN MCNAMARA HUGHES	December 9
BRIAN STAPLETON	November 12	NOEL LUCINA SENERCHIA	December 10
RONALD ALLEN, JR.	November 12	JOSEPH MICHAEL KLINKO	December 11
SARAH FOLEY	November 14	RICHARD C. BENNETT, JR.	December 11
TIARRA WEB	November 15	NEIL GEORGE SWEETMAN	December 14
GREGORY ROBERT SANTOS	November 16	ZAIRE D. HALL	December 14
CARLOS CARMONA	November 21	ALAN RICHARD HOFFMAN, SR.	December 15
DY'MOND EMMERICH MOODY	November 22	FRANK THOMAS FROUGE	December 16
ROBERT MICHAEL FROUGE	November 24	THOMAS VAZZANO	December 19
JAMES WORSHAM	November 25	CHRIS LEAHY	December 20
LYNETTE DANIEL SWANSON	November 27	JAVIER DANIEL COSME	December 20
HEATHER ROSE RARO	November 29	CHRISTIE LEA ENDE	December 21
KEVIN RASCOE	November 30	JOSHUA R. EHMAN	December 21
		JOSEPH ANTHONY PELOSO IV	December 22
		NATHAN BURROWS	December 25
		CRYSTAL LYNN HAYDEN	December 26
		AALIYAH GABRIELLE DUNN	December 26
		DAVID STANCZYK	December 27
		GEORGE W. JULESON IV	December 27
		GRAZIANO SOLLENNE	December 30
		KYLIE FLANNERY	December 30
		BOBBY BONACCI	December 31
		JOHN McPADDEN	December 31
		JOSHUA R. WRIGHT	Dcccmbcr 31

## BIRTHDAYS

# Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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

NINA TERESA POETA	November 1		
BARBARA ANNE MINAR	November 1	CHRISTOPHER HUBINGER	December 2
ANTHONY EDWARDS	November 4	RYAN JOYCE	December 3
FRANCIS JOSEPH O'HARA	November 4	MATTHEW JOHN EVANS	December 3
MATTHEW MAKAR	November 7	FRANK THOMAS FROUGE	December 4
MICHAEL DAVID BUGLIONE	November 7	EVON EDWARDS	December 4
AMY E. CLEVELAND-JOHNSON	November 9	WILLIAM GAGLIARDI	December 5
PARKER LILY KOLTCHAK	November 10	HALLE ROOT	December 8
SARA BETH ROBINSON HUSZAR	November 11	STEVEN SPRAY	December 8
MITCHELL ELLIOT HARRIS	November 13	AVA JANE HOWERTON	December 8
RON CRISTIANO	November 13	MARY BETH ESPOSITO/HERR	December 9
ALYSSA ANNE MUSHIN	November 13	DANIELLE R. METATOS	December 10
CRISTIANO MATEUS CABASE	November 16	KEITH RONALD BERRY	December 13
THOMAS CHISHOLM	November 17	ROBERT MICHAEL FROUGE	December 14
EDWARD "EDDIE" CASEY	November 19	DAVID TYLER	December 14
VIVIANA ROSE CAVALLI	November 20	DANIEL HOWIE MARTINEZ, JR.	December 15
CAITLIN LOGAN	November 21	EVAN MCNAMARA HUGHES	December 16
DY'MOND EMMERICH MOODY	November 22	ROCCO BONAVITA	December 19
SCOTT LAWRENCE BOOS	November 23	JOVANNI NATAL	December 21
LISA REED	November 27	WILLIAM POTZ	December 23
CHRISTOPHER MULLIGEN	November 28	BRENNA McMENAMEY	December 23
KAYLENA CERCONI	November 28	JOHN PATRICK FLANAGAN	December 24
JOSHUA R. EHMAN	November 28	ETHAN THORNTON	December 24
AMBER PHILLIPS	November 28	JOSEPH DAVID GAGLIARDI SR.	December 24
JOHN R. JONES IV	November 29	PATRICK J. DUBEE	December 26
HEATHER MARIE RARO	November 29	JENNIFER LEIBOWITZ ANTONIER	December 26
JEAN PHILLIPE LOMINY	November 29	JOHN E. MURPHY JR.	December 28
VINNIE MALIANO	November 30	JAMES BLOMBERG	December 31
ANTHONY MICHAEL TEIXEIRA	November 30		
CHRISTIAN LAURENCE RUTTER	November 30		
BRIANNA ROSE SABOL	November 30		

"Love lives on in the memories  
that are forever woven  
in the fabric of our hearts."

-Alan Pedersen

## Angelversaries





## Dealing with Bereavement and Grief during the Holiday Season

First know that people grieve in different ways, and any advice offered is done so for general purposes. You may find some of these tips helpful and that others might not be for you. There is no set way that people are supposed to grieve. We all do it in our own time and in our own way.

Overall, we know that most bereaved people generally cope with their loss pretty well. There is certainly sadness, but most people are able to continue moving forward and slowly rebuild their lives. During the holidays, however, many people find themselves having strong emotional reactions just as they would to other important dates (e.g. loved ones birth date, date of their passing). These reactions are often called *anniversary reactions*.

The holidays come with an expectation of cheerfulness and joy that many people who are grieving the loss of a loved one can find difficult to live up to. Those who are grieving often feel uncomfortable about expressing their sadness out of a fear of "being a downer." Others are often full of well-intended advice as to how to lessen the pain. However, sometimes seemingly innocent remarks can be *intensely painful for someone who is mourning*. For example, a blessing around the Christmas dinner table giving thanks "for the whole family being together" can feel like a knife in the heart. The holiday season can bring with it sudden reminders of the loss through the endless parade of past rituals, traditions and memories.

Here are 10 suggestions of things to try if you're grieving the loss of a loved one through the holiday season:

### Do Less

- Grieving takes a lot out of us physically and emotionally, leaving us depleted of energy. Reduce the pressure on yourself to do it all. Consider cutting back on things like sending out cards, entertaining, baking, decorating, putting up a tree, buying presents, etc.
- Be direct. If you are not in the holiday spirit, be clear about this with others. Let others know what they can, and cannot, expect of you this year.

### Change Your Traditions

- Consider changing your normal holiday routine if the thought of a standard Christmas is too difficult to bear. Perhaps this year you might decide to go on a special trip or have dinner with friends rather than the traditional family get-together.

### Create New Traditions

- You may choose to honor your loved one by creating a new tradition that allows you to keep their memory present. This might be done by setting a special place for your loved one at the dinner table,

or spending part of the day reminiscing about them. Or perhaps hanging a stocking filled with memory keepsakes of them. Sometimes these honoring traditions give you and others permission to talk *about your loved one and remember them at this time of year*.

### Ask For Help

- Talk to someone if you feel you need to. Keeping your feelings all bottled up can exacerbate feelings of isolation. Share your feelings with someone you trust. You may also consider joining a grief group, or starting one of your own.

### Leave When You Need To

- Attending social gatherings can be a good way of coping with the loneliness and isolation of grief; however, there may be times that you feel the need to excuse yourself early...that's ok.

### Dedicate a Gift

- All the holiday shopping can remind us of gifts that we would have thought to buy for our loved one. Consider donating or dedicating a gift in your loved one's honor.

### Do Something Meaningful

- Give back. Volunteer. Do for others. Service is a very powerful healer and scientists have found that doing a kindness is an effective way to alleviate depressive symptoms.

### Self-Care

- Grief can wear our bodies down. This, along with holiday stress, can deplete our body's energy and can leave us prone to colds, flus, aches and pains. Take care of yourself by getting proper sleep, eating healthy foods and exercising.

### Be Gentle With Yourself

- Accept that feelings of anguish are normal and to be expected during the holiday season. Don't assume that if you're having a difficult time with your grief during the holidays that this is a sign you are not healing. Know that you are doing the best that you can and that bereavement takes time.

Prepared by Sheila Gothjepsen, R. Psych (AB).  
Leduc Beaumont Devon Primary Care Network,  
Grief & The Holidays for "Health In a Minute"



# A COMPASSIONATE GIFT

"Grief, like death, is one of the things we don't talk about. The bigger the hole in your heart, the more love there was at one time." These words were stated by Lynda Bluestein, a 76 year-old Bridgeport woman who has been diagnosed with a terminal cancer who refuses "to put death in the whisper category." For her final project, both for her family and for others, she has begun to collect a number of rotary phones to install as "wind phones" in local communities.

Connected to nothing but the wind, the phone can be used as a one-way communication for people to "call" deceased loved ones. Initially, this "wind phone" was created by garden designer Itaru Sasaki of Otsuchi, Japan in 2010 to help him cope with his cousin's death. In an interview, Sasaki stated that "Because my thoughts and feelings to my cousin couldn't be relayed over a regular phone line, I wanted them to be carried on the wind. His "wind phone" was opened to the public in the following year after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami killed over 15,000 people in the Tohoku region. According to Sasaki, the "wind phone" was not designed with any specific religious connotation but rather as a way to reflect on his loss.

Lynda Bluestein said she learned about "wind phones" through a film crew that was doing a documentary on her life. They told her they were headed to East Nashville, TN, where a "wind phone" was to be installed, and the idea "struck me to the fiber of my being," she said. "We're told grief is something to keep to ourselves. To me, a "wind phone" is a way to be present in public and share grief in a positive way. I want everyone to remember that we're always connected to the ones we love."

After writing to her friends about her idea, Lynda started to receive desk phones, Princess telephones, wall phones, and other rotary phones in the mail. Her first "wind phone" was installed at the Ridgebury Congregational Church in Ridgefield, CT. The church's pastor, the Rev. Debbie Rundlett suggested installing the phone box in a copse of trees near the church. Lynda and her son Jacob Shannon brought the phone and a phone stand her son had built to the church property. Jacob also created a path leading from the church to the "wind phone." A dedication ceremony was held on Sept. 24, 2023 with attendees coming from as far as New Hampshire, Kentucky, and California.

Lynda recently received approval from the Westport Library to donate two "wind phones" there: for patrons to check out of the library and one specifically for children. As far as other future sites, Lynda Bluestein said she would love to see a "wind phone" installed in Sandy Hook and Newtown, CT.

Ridgefield's "wind phone" is the first in Fairfield county. The phone in Ridgefield is attached to a wooden post with a little roof, at the end of a gravel path. There's a bench next to it. A plaque above it reads: "This phone will never ring. It is connected by love to nowhere and everywhere. It is for those who have an empty place in their heart left by a loved one. Say hello, say goodbye. Talk of the past, the present, the future. The 'wind phone' will carry your message."

May all of us remember that our child, grandchild, or sibling is always available to receive our calls.

(I would like to thank our Bridgeport Chapter's Compassionate Friend, Lindsay Dina who is Jamey's mom, for sending me this information about her friend Lynda Bluestein.)

-by *Claudia Margitay-Balogh*

## *TCF's World Wide Candle Lighting Event*

The Compassionate Friends' Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on **December 10th, 2023 at 7:00 pm** local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL), a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24 hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

### *Bridgeport's TCF Chapter's Candle Lighting Event*

<p><b>On Sunday evening, December 10, 2023 at 6:30 pm</b>, our chapter will hold its Candle Lighting Service to honor our children, siblings, and grandchildren <b>at the Paradise Green Gazebo, 121 Huntington Rd. Stratford, CT.</b> There will be a continuous photo stream as</p>	<p>well as the reading of names and the lighting of battery run candles at 7:00 pm. <b>More information will be sent out via email as the time draws near.</b> Please dress appropriately for the cold weather as we will be outside.</p>
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**For our December 12, 2023 chapter meeting at 6:45 pm**, we invite all to come with a sampling of your child's, grandchild's or sibling's favorite holiday finger food. We will enjoy an informal get-together with our compassionate friends. More information will be sent out via email as the time draws near. **We look forward to being with you and hearing about your loving memories.**

#### The Circle of Love Together

We shall join hearts and hands across the earth and decorate the world with hope and healing and remembered laughter. We shall remain forever linked through the love of our absent children, parents, husbands and wives, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends- all of our loved ones who dance across the rainbows ahead of us.

**WE ARE A FAMILY CIRCLE-  
BROKEN BY DEATH,  
MENDED BY LOVE.**

May this day, and every day, be days for us to laugh and sing, to dance and dream. May this day, and every day, be days of celebration and the chance to give one more hug, to say one more,

"I love you."

**MAY LOVE BE WHAT WE REMEMBER MOST!**