



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bridgeport Chapter

July/August 2024

Newsletter

Volume 24 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.

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.

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

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:

TCF c/o Leslie Minasi, 34 Cedar Hill Rd, Easton, CT 06612

Email: contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Website: www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Facebook: www.Facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

National Office Address:

The Compassionate Friends
48660 Pontiac Trail #930805
Wixom, MI 48393

Regional Co-Ordinator

Mary Lemley
203-483-9935

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:

July 9, 2024 6:45 – 8:45 pm

August 13, 2024 6:45 – 8:45 pm

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

Directions:

Take I-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 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 the Food Pantry.

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter

Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders

Dr. Charles Kochan and Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Secretary: Janet Spray

Treasurer/Website Coordinator: Leslie Minasi

Zoom Coordinator: Kristen Cable

On line newsletter: Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Michele Peloso

Hospitality: Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian: Michele Peloso

The Butterfly

By Priscilla J. Norton

In loving memory of my daughter Linda



One of my earliest childhood memories is of chasing and catching a beautiful butterfly; its velvety soft wings exquisitely colored in black, yellow, blue, and green. Because I was so young, I saw only its beauty—not its fragility, and, needless to say, it never flew again. It was ultimately pressed and preserved for me to look at and examine by the hour with utter fascination, amazement, and awe. It was MINE. But, eventually, somehow, my butterfly got lost, and in spite of all my searching, crying, and praying, I was never able to find it, or another like it, again.

I had all but forgotten about my butterfly until the birth of my daughter Linda. As I examined, admired, and adored my tiny, beautiful baby daughter, I recalled many of the same feelings I had with my butterfly: awe, amazement, fascination, joy, and overwhelming love. She was MINE, too ... for a while. The capture of my butterfly and the birth of my daughter—the loss of my butterfly and the death of my daughter—are forever entwined in memory.

As a child, caterpillars seemed to me to be such ugly, crawly, sticky, scary creatures, and I can remember stepping on them and destroying them. One day my father explained to me that MY butterfly was once a caterpillar. He said that because caterpillars were so battered and bruised as they crawled around, they made themselves a ‘hiding home’ in which to recover. If they were able to repair the damage, they could then emerge as a butterfly. It was difficult for me to believe, then, how anything that ugly could turn into such beauty, but if my father said it, then it just had to be true.

As I look back upon my grief and readjustment, I am reminded once again of my depression, my anger, my bruised pride, my hopelessness, and helplessness. Like the caterpillar, I retreated for a time to a ‘hiding home’ - the cocoon of my beautiful, friendly, tender, kind, and loving Compassionate Friends support group. How can I ever thank my Compassionate Friends for helping me heal and emerge from my cocoon of grief? I have found within me a spirit I never knew existed. I am now able to see and seek out the sunsets, sunrises, and rainbows. I smell the flowers of springtime and summer, and the beauty makes me want to cry for joy. I hear the roar of the ocean, the stillness of the night, and the birds singing in the morning, children laughing, and raindrops falling. I listen with my heart to all the love surrounding me, and I thank God every day for it all, as I realize now that Life is as fragile and as beautiful as the butterfly.



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 defer 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 law. *The Compassionate Friends is a registered 501(c)(3) organization.*

Please make out your "Love Gift" check to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
c/o Leslie Minasi, treasurer
34 Cedar Hill Road, Easton, CT 06612

Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

Memory's Lovely Garden

There's a very special garden
Where the plants of memory grow
Nurtured by the kindness
And concern that loved ones show.
The roots are cherished memories
Of good times in the past
The branches tender promises
That souls endure and last.
It's a place of peace and beauty
Where bright new hopes can start.
It's memory's lovely garden
That soothes the hurting heart.

In loving memory and honor
of our son
Kevin Michael Kochan
on his Angelversary

In Memory of

Carlo

We love you with all our being,
You are always with us
in our hearts and our souls
Love, Mamma and Papa

WITH EVERLASTING LOVE,

IN MEMORY
OF
JUSTIN & STEVEN SPRAY

In Memory of

Joseph Anthony Peloso IV

*Your presence is forever felt.
Our love for you is forevermore.*
With love, Mom and Dad

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

May we keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing these birthdays during July in our thoughts and in our hearts.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Anna Maria Rino	July 1	Frank Argonese	July 19
Kim Thibodeau Chiaraluce	July 2	Marci Byiteck	July 21
Eric S. Hultzberg	July 4	Kyle Jeffrey Gedney	July 21
Christian Lawrence Rutter	July 4	Senior Airman Lawrence Malapit III	July 21
Megan Jane Arsenault	July 4	Sean Earel	July 23
Christian Ferris Rakoczy	July 4	Melissa Erika Mancini	July 23
Joseph Sante Cajigas	July 6	Bobby Provenzano	July 23
Michael Espach	July 6	Phillip Weisgable Jr,	July 24
Erin Babineau	July 12	Scott McClenathan	July 26
Jeremiah Shannon Salvatore	July 12	Mark Torres	July 28
Alexa Rae Heron	July 13	Lisa Read	July 30
Jodi Davidowski	July 14		
Adam Gardner	July 14		
Charles Robert Martin	July 15		
Gina Dechello	July 16		
Sommer Leigh Bokina	July 17		
Laila Sydney Walters	July 17		
Richard Eliot Bonosky	July 18		
Daniel Quirk	July 19		



Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

May we keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing these birthdays during August in our thoughts and in our hearts.

August Birthdays

Barbara Young	August 2	Andreas (AJ) Justesen	August 15
Dan O'Sullivan	August 3	Brandon Giordano	August 17
Eric Allen	August 3	Anthony Michael Teixeira	August 17
George Andrew Dirocco	August 3	Daniel Lawence Toole	August 18
Paul William Minar	August 5	Carmine J. Munz Jr.	August 18
Brian Bell	August 7	Victoria "Tori" Lynn Koetsch	August 21
Robert Mangano	August 8	Katrell Bohannan	August 22
Claire Ann DeStefano	August 8	Kasandra Sanders	August 22
Thomas J. Henthorn Jr.	August 8	Lori Argonese	August 23
		Lauren Alexandra Tvardzik	August 24
James Medvegy (Jamie)	August 9	Aaron Thomas Hine	August 25
Steven C. Belenchia	August 9	Peter Ronald Radzwillas	August 25
Peter Bradford Kovacs	August 9	Danny Stein	August 26
David Anthony Gierula	August 9	Jamie Ritter	August 27
William Kevin Smith	August 10	Keith McCarthy	August 27
Douglas C. Cole Jr.	August 11	John Patrick Flanagan	August 27
Michele Broadley	August 12	Christopher Papp	August 27
		Barbara Anne Minar	August 27
Ava Jane Howerton	August 12	Diana-Alexandra Breaz	August 28
Jeremy Saxe	August 13	Jason William Cannon	August 29
Joey Clancola	August 13	Tamika Cameron	August 29
Korey Jordan	August 13	Michael David Buglione	August 30
Geoffrey Gardner	August 13		

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED... JULY ANGELVERSARIES

Life that touches the hearts of others goes on forever...

Mark Torreso	July 1		
Joel Alexis Nieves	July 1	Stefana Monhollen	July 20
Marissa Irene Irwin	July 4	Robert Mangano	July 20
Katie Fontneau	July 4	James (Tommy) Stuart	July 20
Kevin Sutherland	July 4	Kyle Jeffrey Gedney	July 21
Wendy Joan Carpenter	July 4	Susan Woessner	July 22
Fred A. Poppa Jr.	July 5	William Cleary	July 23
Boston Grimm Stibel	July 7	Jon Malone	July 29
Beth Logan	July 8	Chuckie Rotolo	July 30
Sabina Elizabeth Ceccarelli	July 9	Brian James Chepya	July 30
Geoffrey Gardner	July 9		
Kevin Michael Kochan	July 10		
Tony Brown	July 11		
DJ Art	July 12		
Brian Stapleton	July 15		
Joseph Michael Klinko	July 15		
Shaun Dowd	July 15		
Brian Michael Cancellieri	July 15		
Tevin Gordon	July 15		
Eric A. Jones	July 16		
Laila Syndey Walters	July 17		
Angelina Joy Pearson	July 18		
Sommer Leigh Bokina	July 19		

Love's heart that was
once *broken* by loss
is restored to love again
by the heart compelled
to love.

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED...

AUGUST ANGELVERSARIES

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

Jennifer D. Gustafson	August 1	Brian Bell	August 21
Maria Skenderis Isola	August 1	Carlo Minasi	August 22
Sarah Foley	August 3	Linda Medina	August 25
Amanda Lynn Daigle	August 5	Jodi Davidowski	August 26
Aaron Hine	August 6	Margarita B. Ramos	August 28
Edward Glover	August 6	Phillip Divincenzi Jr.	August 28
Megan Jane Arsenault	August 6	Jolene Deciucis	August 31
Gregory Hartz	August 7	Charles Berszakiewicz	August 31
Alex Paul Fakhoury	August 7		
Herb Gullberg IV	August 8		
Joseph David Longo	August 8		
Jake Panus	August 9		
Neil George Sweetman	August 10		
Denise Glover	August 11		
Claire Ann Destefano	August 11		
David Anthony Gierula	August 12		
Javier Daniel Cosme	August 14		
Jessica Burrows	August 16		
Jeffrey Yale	August 17		
Joshua Galpin	August 18		
William Kevin Smith	August 19		



Keeping Your Child Alive Through Memorials

Those of us whose children have died know the fear of their memories fading. Needless to say, we will never forget them, but what we desire is that our children will not be forgotten by others. Most of our acquaintances and friends are often afraid of upsetting us or saying something that will make us cry so they avoid speaking about our children. Believing that these well-meaning but misguided actions will help us instead of emotionally hurt us, our friends and acquaintances do not initiate any conversation about our children. Hence, the memories of our children's lives quietly stay below the surface.

One way to get around the awkwardness or timidity of our tragic loss and keep our children's memories alive is through memorials. By celebrating our son's or daughter's life through a memorial is to create a positive way to keep our son or daughter in other people's minds and hearts.

Memorials can be as simple as sharing your child's story with others. This is a powerful way to keep your son or daughter's memory alive. Whether through writing, speaking engagements, or using social media posts, sharing your child's story allows others to hear about the impact he or she had in your life and the lives of others. This can be a healing experience for parents and can help keep your child's spirit alive in the hearts of those who hear the story. For example, during our Bridgeport/Stratford's TCF chapter June meeting, our guest speaker was Stephen Panus, father of sixteen-year-old Jake Panus who was killed in a car crash in 2020. To keep Jake's memory and spirit alive, Stephen Panus has begun speaking to athletic programs, church youth groups, and high school sports teams about dealing with adversity and overcoming it with purpose and resilience. Throughout his two sons' lives, Stephen would inspire his sons to do their best by writing messages of hope and strength on sticky notes signed 'Dad' with a heart. Many came with an affectionate reminder – "I love you both dearly. Have a great day." Stephen's habit of writing sticky notes turned into writing a book entitled *Walk On* after the death of his son Jake. In his book, Panus writes on such topics as authenticity, integrity, honesty, humility, resilience, and forgiveness. The last is particularly important to him, as Panus said he had to forgive to move on from the tragedy of his son's death. His focus is instead locked on helping others handle their grief and find the help they need.

Another way to honor a child is to support causes in your child's name. Many parents find comfort in supporting causes that were important to their child. Whether it's a charity, foundation, or community organization, donating time or resources to a cause that was dear

Keeping Your Child Alive Through Memorials

Continued...

to your son's or daughter's heart can be a meaningful way to keep their spirit alive and make a positive impact in their honor.

Planting a memorial tree, buying a memorial bench, or placing a large rock at a beloved park can be a great gesture. One grieving mother, whose young son loved their neighborhood park, planted a tree in his honor and placed a plaque below it in tribute to him. She remarked that she will always love the idea that her son would have climbed the tree as he grew older, and this thought makes her smile.

If you are interested in honoring an outdoorsy, nature-loving child but want to do something that also engages yourself, a garden is a good option. Many towns have Adopt-a-Spot opportunities or need help maintaining existing or proposed gardens in parks, nature areas, and community blocks. Creating a memorial sign for the garden keeps your child's memory close while the demands of planting, watering, and weeding can keep you busy and positively involved.

One of our chapter members Amy Bowman has been in the process of placing a "wind phone" in an area in Milford, CT in honor and loving memory of her granddaughter Brianna Rose Sabol. The concept of a "wind phone" was created in Japan by the garden designer Itara Sasaki in 2010 to help him cope with his cousin's death. The "wind phone" is an unconnected rotary telephone where the grieving can hold a one-way conversation with a deceased loved one. Amy believes that her "wind phone" will give some solace and peace to the grieving as they can speak the words that need to be carried by the wind to their loved one.

Another way to keep your child's spirit alive is by continuing to celebrate special days that hold significance for them. This could include their birthdays, the anniversary of their passing or other important milestones in their lives. By taking the time to commemorate these days, parents can honor their child's memory and keep their spirit alive in other hearts as well.

There are many ways to ensure that your child's memory lives on. Parents, grandparents, or siblings can find solace and healing in the midst of their grief by creating a memorial when they feel that they are able to do so. There is no right way or incorrect way. It can be as simple as sharing a story or as elaborate as creating a financial scholarship or designing a digital website. Above all, we must remember that even though our children may not be physically present, they will live forever in our hearts, minds, emotions, and love.