



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

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

November/December 2025

Newsletter

Volume 25 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.

*"Only by living my grief fully
will I be able to walk through it
and learn what it has to tell me."*

Martha W. Hickman

from her book Healing After Loss

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, 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
P.O. Box 446
Wheaton, IL 60187

630-990-0010 877-969-0010

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:

November 11, 2025 6:45 – 8:45 pm

December 9, 2025 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

Online newsletter: Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Michele Peloso

Hospitality: Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian: Michele Peloso

A Time of Meditation

TCF Terre Haute, IN

Reprinted with permission from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends



Thanksgiving... a time of meditation and giving thanks...

Thanksgiving... a time of bitter pain and haunting memories for many bereaved parents.

“How will we cope with the holiday?” “How will we survive this happy time?” “What is there to be thankful for?” These questions toss our souls, at times, at the very dark times, and taunt us with doubt and fear. Fighting the creeping bitterness, we wait and long for the days of January.

As the yeas pass, however, the holidays are no longer totally tinged with horror and emptiness. As the acceptance of the death settles in our hearts, the holiday smiles become more genuine. At least some of the warmth returns. But for parents who have only recently (and recently can encompass months and years) suffered the death of a child, the holidays are bleak indeed.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that despondency and sorrow at this time of year are normal. What else could be expected of a grieving parent? Joy? Laughter? A sense of overflowing love and outstretched arms? No...never.

We can refrain from demanding too much of ourselves. We can recognize that at this point we are emotionally exhausted, we are lonely, and we are sad. Maybe we are also angry, guilty, and/or bitter. The feelings that arrive with the beginning of a holiday without our beloved sons and daughters are not to be ignored or pushed aside into the corner of our hearts.

By recognizing all of this, we can say “no” to situations or people, even loved friends, who will create more pain. We can cry, silently or loudly, without shame. We can long for the essence of our children, and we can remember them with love.

The dreams of lifetimes die when children die. The hurt is often unbearable. But, if we allow ourselves the freedom from grief and sorrow, we also open the paths of new happiness and new hopes and new dreams. And the child who was a part of us will live in our memories and in our hearts.

I recently read a book about beginnings and endings, depicting how days do not end but night begins, autumn marks the beginnings of winter, and leaves fall from the tree to the ground and feed the earth for new life.

Death is a final ending to life on earth. For bereaved parents, however, who suffer the pain, the tragedy, and the terrible doubts, the ending of our children’s lives can be a beginning for new feelings, new understanding, and hopefully, new compassion for ourselves.

But first, we need to follow the instincts of our souls and allow our bodies and hearts to grieve.



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
Please send to: Ms. Leslie Minasi, treasurer
34 Cedar Hill Road
Easton, CT 06612

In loving memory of
Justin & Steven Spray
"I have loved you for a thousand years;
I will love you for a thousand more."
My heart breaks for both of you
every day.
Until we meet again,
Love, Mom

In loving remembrance of
Marshall D. Maxwell
on his angelversary (11/19/2019)
Marshall Matters!

Happy 35th Birthday, Carlo !!
We wish you were here with us to
celebrate with us. We love you and
miss you always with every fiber
of our hearts and souls.
Love, Mamma & Papa

In loving memory of
Brianna Rose Sabol
on her Angelversary
"missing you every day!"
Love, WAYA (Grandma)

LOVE GIFTS (CONTINUED)

Our Love Gift for Christmas
In loving memory of
Daniel M. Quirk
Always in Our Hearts!
Love,
Dad, Mom, Matt & John

In loving memory
of my son
Jorge Ospina
“My mind still talks to you, and my
heart still looks at you. But, my soul
knows that you are at peace.”
I miss you deeply! Love, Mom

In loving memory
for my sons' birth dates
Alan Hoffman (Dec.15)
and
Aaron Hoffman (Dec.12)
With remembrance and love,
Mom

On your 43rd Birthday...
Joseph A. Peloso IV
Our love lives on forever.
Always in our hearts,
Mom & Dad

when sorrow leaves your spoken words behind,
when only silence ponders in your mind,
when neither thought nor voice nor touching hand can find
an image or a language for your pain ...
then do be brave and let your tears explain.

-Sascha Wagner

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

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

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Edward Angelo Pipkin	Nov. 2	Tracy Lynn Hollister	Nov. 19
Derick James Springer	Nov. 2	Carlos Carmona	Nov. 21
Zoe Elizabeth Anyan	Nov. 3	Dy'mond Emmerich Moody	Nov. 22
Kristin Ann Carveth	Nov. 4	Robert Michael Frouge	Nov. 24
Edward Glover	Nov. 4	James Worsham	Nov. 25
James (Jamey) Guenther Dina	Nov. 5	Lynette Daniel Swanson	Nov. 27
Julian Cerrato	Nov. 8	Heather Rose Raro	Nov. 29
Keith Ronald Berry	Nov. 9	Kevin Rascoe	Nov. 30
David L. Carlson	Nov. 9		
Phillip Divincenzo Jr.	Nov. 9		
Brian Stapleton	Nov. 12		
Ronald Allen Jr.	Nov. 12		
Sarah Foley	Nov. 14		
Tiarra Web	Nov. 15		
Gregory Robert Santos	Nov. 16		

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.

Our Children

Loved, Missed, and Remembered....

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Alexander J. ("AJ") Aquilar	Dec. 2	Christie Lea Ende	Dec. 21
Daniel Howie Martinez Jr.	Dec. 3	Joshua R. Ehman	Dec. 21
Kevonna Edwards	Dec. 3	Joseph Anthony Peloso IV	Dec. 22
Carlo Minasi	Dec. 3	Nathan Burrows	Dec. 25
Beverly Bruno	Dec. 4	Crystal Lynn Hayden	Dec. 26
Dawn Ann Kalman	Dec. 4	Aaliyah Gabrielle Dunn	Dec. 26
Michael Rowley	Dec. 4	David Stanczyk	Dec. 27
Leo Farrell	Dec. 7	George W. Juleson IV	Dec. 27
Steven Wall	Dec. 9	Graziano Solenne	Dec. 30
Evan McNamara Hughes	Dec. 9	Kylie Flannery	Dec. 30
Noel Lucina Senerchia	Dec. 10	Bobby Bonacci	Dec. 31
Joseph Michael Klinko	Dec. 11	John McPadden	Dec. 31
Richard C. Bennett Jr.	Dec. 11	Joshua R. Wright	Dec. 31
Aaron Matthew Hoffman	Dec. 12		
Lucas Stephen Spear	Dec. 12		
Neil George Sweetman	Dec. 14		
Zaire D. Hall	Dec. 14		
Alan Richard Hoffman Sr.	Dec. 15		
Frank Thomas Frouge	Dec. 16		
Thomas Vazzano	Dec. 19		
Chris Leahy	Dec. 20		
Javier Daniel Cosme	Dec. 20		



NOVEMBER ANGELVERSARIES

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED...

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

Nina Teresa Poeta	Nov. 1	Viviana Rose Cavalli	Nov. 20
Barbara Anne Minar	Nov. 1	Caitlin Logan	Nov. 21
Anthony Edwards	Nov. 4	Dy'mond Emmerich Moody	Nov. 22
Francis Joseph O'Hara	Nov. 4	Scott Lawrence Boos	Nov. 23
Matthew Makar	Nov. 7	Lisa Reed	Nov. 27
Michael David Buglione	Nov. 7	Christopher Mulligen	Nov. 28
Amy Cleveland-Johnson	Nov. 9	Kaylena Cercone	Nov. 28
Parker Lily Koltchak	Nov. 10	Joshua R. Ehman	Nov. 28
Sara Beth R. Huszar	Nov. 11	Amber Phillips	Nov. 28
Mitchell Elliot Harris	Nov. 13	John R. Jones IV	Nov. 29
Ron Cristiano	Nov. 13	Heather Marie Raro	Nov. 29
Alyssa Anne Mushin	Nov. 13	Jean Phillipe Lominy	Nov. 29
Cristiano M. Cabase	Nov. 16	Vinnie Maliano	Nov. 30
Thomas Chisholm	Nov. 17	Anthony Michael Teixeira	Nov. 30
Shawn Gerte	Nov. 17	Christian Laurence Rutter	Nov. 30
Edward "Eddie" Casey	Nov. 19	Brianna Rose Sabol	Nov. 30
Marshall D. Maxwell	Nov. 19		

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

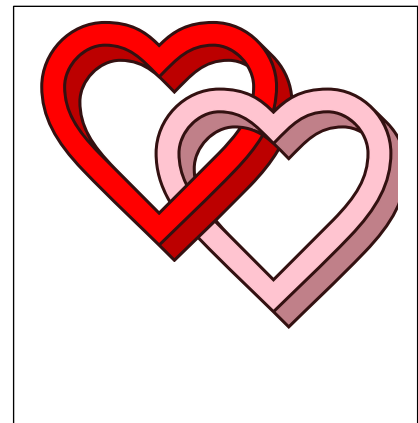
**" There is a place that we call
Memory – a province by itself
which, though unseen,
is home and haven
to the heart... and there,
in peace and beauty, waiting,
are those with whom we
shared our yesterdays."**

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED...

DECEMBER ANGELVERSARIES

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

Christopher Hubinger	Dec. 2		
Ryan Joyce	Dec. 3	Rocco Bonavita	Dec. 19
Matthew John Evans	Dec. 3	Jovanni Natal	Dec. 21
Frank Thomas Frouge	Dec. 4	William Potz	Dec. 23
Evon Edwards	Dec. 4	Brenna McMenamey	Dec. 23
William Gagliardi	Dec. 5	John Patrick Flanagan	Dec. 24
Aaron Matthew Hoffman	Dec. 7	Ethan Thornton	Dec. 24
Halle Root	Dec. 8	Joseph David Gagliardi Sr.	Dec. 24
Steven Spray	Dec. 8	Patrick J. Dubee	Dec. 26
Ava Jane Howerton	Dec. 8	Jennifer Leibowitz Antonier	Dec. 26
Mary Beth Esposito/Herr	Dec. 9	John E. Murphy Jr.	Dec. 28
Danielle R. Metatos	Dec. 10	James Blomberg	Dec. 31
Keith Ronald Berry	Dec. 13		
Robert Michael Frouge	Dec. 14		
David Tyler	Dec. 14		
Daniel Howie Martinez Jr	Dec. 15		
Evan McNamara Hughes	Dec. 16		



THE WEIGHT OF GRIEF

SCULPTURE BY CELEST ROBERGE (1998)



*At this moment,
I cannot speak
because of the overwhelming tears
and the crushing pain.
In the mirror, I see this image of myself.*

In loving memory of Brittney M. Davis (1988-2024) from mom, Katherine Collins

HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

-by Shirley Melin of The Compassionate Friends, Fox Valley Chapter, Aurora IL with some additions from the Montgomery, AL Chapter.

Holidays, birthdays, and other special days are usually times for family gatherings and celebrations. [When we come together for the first time after the death of our child, it can be difficult.](#) Our families try to protect us in the best way they can, but we are still hurting. How can we cope? How can we as grieving parents handle these times in a realistic and effective way?

[First, we must acknowledge and accept our feelings.](#) Tears, depression, and loneliness are all natural reactions. At the same time, we should not feel as though we are betraying our child if we are able to enjoy some of the festivities.

[If the thought of preparing for these special days seems overwhelming,](#) one helpful first step may be to make a list of items to be done in planning for the holiday. We could have a family conference and together decide what is important. For example, what traditions do we want to continue? What would some members find meaningful, or what might be too painful? [What changes, if any, would we want to make?](#) Consider whether a task can be shared, whether someone else can take it on, or whether it should be eliminated. Whatever decisions are reached, this sharing can demonstrate recognition and respect for each person's values and feelings.

If there have been family traditions that have always occurred, we need to decide whether we want to carry them on this year or if this is a good time to begin new ones. We need to consider and discuss ways of keeping traditions while trying to lessen the pain of loss, perhaps by making some changes in the usual way of doing things. [Remember that although we may decide to do some things differently this year, we can decide to return to earlier customs another year if we wish.](#)

It is important to realize that while holidays and special days are traditionally a time of festivity, they can also be a time of frantic busyness and resultant fatigue. We must not set unrealistic expectations for ourselves to be joyful. [As a grieving mother, father, grandparent, or sibling, we must recognize that we may simply be unable to function at our usual pace.](#) We may need to break tasks down into smaller, more manageable chunks, and set goals we can achieve. Fatigue can be overwhelming and lead to feelings of depression under the best of circumstances. [We must not over-extend or over-commit.](#) We need to eliminate the unnecessary and reduce the pressure on ourselves and others. By talking over what is important to family members, priorities can be set, tasks shared, and plans made to accomplish those things considered essential. [We need to decide what we can handle comfortably and let our needs be known to friends and relatives.](#)

Our lives have changed. Our holidays will be different. It's not a choice of pain or no pain, but how we manage the pain we feel. It is important to remember to do what is comfortable for us and for our family. [Experience has shown that, for many who have navigated these holidays and special occasions before, the anticipation is often more challenging than the day itself.](#)

THE OPEN CHAIR MOVEMENT BY STEPHEN PANUS

Grief is the most universal of human experiences, yet it is the one our society most often avoids. When grief does come, society urges us to hide it, rush through it, or silence it with platitudes. We live in a culture that celebrates strength but rarely understands that true strength is not the absence of sorrow but rather the willingness to face it head on. Yes, our vulnerability is our strength. We must never confuse vulnerability for weakness! When we run from grief, we run from love itself because grief is simply love's shadow. It is the echo of all that deeply matters. To deny our grief is to deny the depth of our connection, the weight of our memories, the truth of our humanity, and our connection to one another. Grief, when honored, does not diminish us. It reshapes us. It reminds us that love never dies, that those we've lost remain with us in the legacy we carry forward. By giving grief its rightful place, we do not stay trapped in sorrow, but are freed to walk on with greater compassion, courage, and peace. Your pain is only part of you; it's not the end of you.

What if, instead of running from grief, we stopped and honored it as we WALK ON in our life journeys? *The Open Chair Movement* is a dynamic reminder of the loved ones we carry in our hearts. **No matter where you are, simply look for an open chair and place the printed card upon the open chair in your city, town, village, school, hospital, church, community center, town square, park bench, bus, subway, airport, library or any other place you might encounter an empty, open chair and allow the message on the card to compel people to sit, to remember someone who they loved deeply, to honor her or him with a quiet, reflective moment or prayer, and then to walk on and pass the card on to another empty, open chair for another human to experience it.**

If you would like to receive some *Open Chair* cards, please email your name and mailing address to: openchairmovement@gmail.com

Please join and support *The Open Chair Movement*!

Peace & Love - Stephen Panus

Editor's note: Stephen Panus and his wife Kellie are members of our Bridgeport Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. In 2024, Stephen spoke at one of our meetings about his grief journey ever since Stephen and Kellie's beloved son Jake (age 16) died in an automobile accident in 2020. Stephen has indeed continued to keep Jake's legacy alive through many avenues. For further information about Stephen, please log on to www.stephenpanus.com