



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

Bridgeport Chapter

July/August 2026

Newsletter

Volume 26 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.

"Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."

-Vicki Harrison

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
P.O. Box 700
Jenson Beach, FL 34957
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:

July 14, 2026 6:45 – 8:45 pm

August 11, 2026 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

Planning A Mini-Vacation

Submitted by Leslie Minasi (Carlo's Mamma) TCF Bridgeport, CT Chapter



“Travel isn’t always pretty. It isn’t always comfortable. Sometimes it hurts; it even breaks your heart. But that’s okay. The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart, and on your body. You take something with you. Hopefully, you leave something good behind.”- Anthony Bourdain

Planning a special trip after losing a child can be an essential part of the grief process and grief journey. Traveling helps remind us that the world is filled with meaning, love, and beauty. By shedding regular routines and familiar environments, there are opportunities to see our loss through a different lens with unique insights and perspectives of our memories. Some of the greatest epiphanies about life and relationships can happen while traveling.

Travel is not a magic solution that will resolve your pain and loss. Grief isn’t something we get over or get past, but it is something we can get through. Travel can be a healthy and healing coping mechanism. Please know and remember that your child, grandchild, or sibling wants you to live your life fully, to find happiness, and not to be in a continual state of suffering.

PLANNING a Mini-Vacation for grieving parents (and others) requires balancing gentle distraction with space for emotional processing, focusing on comfort, flexibility, and low-stress environments. Prioritize safe, quiet, or comforting destinations, such as natural settings, spas, or quiet family retreats. Keep itineraries flexible with ample downtime, allowing for spontaneous emotional needs rather than rigid schedules.

The goal of a Mini-Vacation is not to escape grief but to find a temporary, peaceful reprieve that allows for healing.

Key Planning Steps for Grieving Parents (and others) are:

1. **Define the Trip’s Purpose:** Decide if the goal is rest, commemoration, or distraction.
2. **Choose the Right Environment:** Select a destination that offers comfort and peace.
3. **Communicate Needs:** Inform travel companions that you may need downtime.
4. **Plan Low-Stress Activities:** Opt for restorative activities rather than hectic sightseeing.
5. **Allow for Flexibility:** Do not overschedule nor create an exhausting marathon.



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 and send it to Leslie Minasi treasurer, 34 Cedar Hill Road, Easton, CT 06612**

Or donate through PayPal on our website.

Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

Memories

The certain special memories
That follow me each day,
Cast your shadow in my life
In a certain way.
Sometimes the blowing wind
Or the lyrics of a song
Make me stop and think of you
Sometimes all day long.
Memories are good to have
To share and keep in my heart,
Just knowing that you're still inside
Makes sure we'll never part.

Collette Covington
TCF Lake Charles, Louisiana

In Honor of
Daniel M. Quirk
On His Birthday
*Always in our hearts,
Mom, Dad, Matt, & John*

With love to our son Carlo



*Another year of Missing
One year further away from your smile
And one year closer to seeing you laugh
again.*

You are always in our hearts and souls,
every minute of every day.
Love, Mamma and Papa

Let warm memories
be as close to you
as the warmth of summer.

Memories will bring you
love from the past,
courage for the present,
hope for the future.

In your gathering of memories,
invite your courage
to remember everything.

-Sascha Wagner

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	Richard Eliot Bonosky	July 18
Kim Thibodeau Chiaraluce	July 2	Daniel Quirk	July 19
Michael Maiette	July 3	Frank Argonese	July 19
Brianna Lennon	July 4	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	James (Jimmy) Casey	July 23
Joseph Sante Cajigas	July 6	Melissa Erika Mancini	July 23
Michael Espach	July 6	Bobby Provenzano	July 23
Erin Babineau	July 12	Phillip Weisgable Jr.	July 24
Jeremiah Shannon Salvatore	July 12	Scott McClenathan	July 26
Alexa Rae Heron	July 13	Mark Torreso	July 28
Jodi Davidowski	July 14	Jenna Lynn La Croix	July 28
Adam Gardner	July 14	Lisa Read	July 30
Charles Robert Martin	July 15		
Gina Dechello	July 16		
Sommer Leigh Bokina	July 17		
Laila Sydney Walters	July 17		

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 Lawrence Toole	August 18
Paul William Minar	August 5	Carmine J. Munz Jr.	August 18
Brian Bell	August 7	Kevin Michael Corcoran Jr.	August 18
Robert Mangano	August 8	Victoria "Tori" Lynn Koetsch	August 21
Claire Ann DeStefano	August 8	Katrell Bohannon	August 22
Thomas J. Henthorn Jr.	August 8	Kassandra Sanders	August 22
James Medvegy (Jamie)	August 9	Lori Argonese	August 23
		Lauren Alexandra Tvardzik	August 24
Steven C. Belenchia	August 9	Aaron Thomas Hine	August 25
Peter Bradford Kovacs	August 9	Peter Ronald Radzwillas	August 25
David Anthony Gierula	August 9	Danny Stein	August 26
William Kevin Smith	August 10	Jamie Ritter	August 27
Douglas C. Cole Jr.	August 11	Keith McCarthy	August 27
Michele Broadley	August 12	John Patrick Flanagan	August 27
Ava Jane Howerton	August 12	Christopher Papp	August 27
Jeremy Saxe	August 13	Barbara Anne Minar	August 27
Joey Ciancola	August 13	Diana-Alexandra Breaz	August 28
Korey Jordan	August 13	Jason William Cannon	August 29
Geoffrey Gardner	August 13	Tamika Cameron	August 29
		Michael David Buglione	August 30

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED...

JULY ANGELVERSARIES

A 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	Michael Maiette	August 27
Edward Glover	August 6	Margarita B. Ramos	August 28
Megan Jane Arsenault	August 6	Phillip Divincenzi Jr.	August 28
Edward Torrence	August 6	Jolene Deciuicis	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		
Brittney Maudery Davis	August 15		
Jessica Burrows	August 16		
Jeffrey Yale	August 17		
Joshua Galpin	August 18		
William Kevin Smith	August 19		



Forever Entwined by Annette Mennen Baldwin

Losing a child to death is statistically improbable, yet all parents harbor the concept as their worst fear. But when children do die, the anxiety of that possibility pales against the soul wrenching horror of the reality.

As grieving parents, we freeze in time as our focus is on the primal necessities such as breathing or drinking water. After the initial shock has ceased to control our every moment, we seek answers. Can I get through this? Do I want to get through this? How have others managed to continue living after their child has died?

Then, there are the feelings and thoughts that flood our mind. I have disconnected from my friends and even my family. I don't want to go forward; the pain is too intense. Life is no longer a joy. My heart is broken. I will never see my child again.

If we are fortunate enough to find a Compassionate Friends Group, we meet people who have taken this nightmare journey and survived. Our first meeting is the most difficult. (At my first meeting, I could only say my son's name.) But soon after, we tell our story to those who have experienced the death of their child, and we find that talking to kindred souls can be cathartic. If we persevere and continue to attend meetings, get to know other parents, participate in the group discussions, cry with others, and smile at the memories of our child, we begin the healing process.

Now our lives are forever entwined with those of other parents who have lost a child to death. Like the Celtic knot, we are now part of an eternal paradigm: we are strands in the knot, weaving our stories into each other's lives. This interlace of our lives is a permanent and beautiful blending of souls seeking comfort from one another. Our reality is shared by others; we lean on them; they lean on us. We give; we receive.

Many friends from our lives before the death of our child hesitate to mention our child's name and even fear talking about our child's life and listening to our memories. But, we don't want to forget our child as that would be the worst betrayal. We want to talk about our child's life and keep his or her spirit with us always. Those in our lives who do not share this feeling are not part of our eternal paradigm; they will never be entwined with us as we complete our journey on this earth.

The Celtic knot, the symbol of eternity, is symbolic of the relationships we have found at Compassionate Friends. These lives are forever woven into ours. We accept each other's perspectives and share their sorrows and the joys of their memories. There is a place in our Celtic knot for all parents who have lost a child. As other parents join us, they are enfolded forever into the eternal paradigm of healing and compassion.



