



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

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

September/October 2026

Newsletter

Volume 26 No. 9 & 10

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.

"It's called grief work because finding your way through grief is hard work. If you put it off like a messy chore, it just sits there waiting for you."

-Marty Tousley

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

National Office Address:

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 700
Jensen Beach, FL 34957
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:

September 8, 2026 6:45 – 8:45 pm

October 13, 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.

If there is inclement weather and the meeting is cancelled, an email will be sent to our chapter members.

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

Nuggets of Grief Truth
Gathered From The 49th Conference of The Compassionate Friends
Which Was Held in Baltimore, Maryland in July 2026

By Claudia Margitay-Balogh

“Grief was not a choice.”

“Grief is the experience of a profound loss.”

“Grief isn’t just missing someone. It’s learning to exist in a world without someone we weren’t ready to live without.”

“Grief is like your fingerprint - individually unique.”

“Grief transforms our lives.”

“Meaning is not in the death, but in the person we become.”

“How did your child die?

No!

How did your child live?

is the better question to be answered!”

“Because of society’s illiterate notions, we try to digest our grief to appease others. This is wrong. We need to make our feelings bigger.”

“Sadness exists because of love.”

“Grief is like fear.” “Courage is the decision to act in the midst of fear.”

“We learn to live in the ‘and’ & ‘both’. We can be shattered and heal. Our hearts do break but grow in love and courage and capacity.”

“Grief shared is grief survived”



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

You can also use PayPal for your love gift by logging into
Contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Please include the wording for the love gift.

Happy Heavenly Birthday
To my beautiful
LAUREN!

I miss you, and I love you the most.
Love, Mom

Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

Vespers by Sascha Wagner

Just at sunset
does your busy day
suddenly fall silent
and remember?
Does the rising night
make you ready
for seeing that face again,
for feeling that touch?
Let the sunset
do its magic.
Invite the rising night
to cast its dream.
Have we not said
a thousand times and more
that we are richest
when the heart remembers?

The summer runs to harvest...
Do you ask?
How can a harvest be without my child?
Friend, someday soon
the harvest in your life
will bring you hope and wealth
from love remembered.

Loved, Missed, and Remembered....

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

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Darrell Bennett	September 2	Will Ryan	September16
Sincere Pettway	September 2	Robert Carbone	September17
Christopher R. Viera	September 3	Jonas Blackwell	September17
Vanessa Christina Montes	September 3	David Sampson	September19
Joseph Vittorio Jr.	September 4	Tevin Gordon	September19
Scott Nishball	September 4	Nashia DuBois	September19
Stefana Monhollen	September 5	Vinnie Maliano	September20
Danielle R. Metatos	September 6	Alex Paul Fakhoury	September20
Joseph Conrad Tursi	September 6	Erik Jason Dobyns	September21
Michael James Jr.	September 7	Stephen F. Zuraw	September22
Nicole Laquesse	September 7	Justin Joseph Margitay-Balogh	September25
Chuckie Rotolo	September 8	Robert Smuniewski	September25
David E. Cilento	September 8	Anthony Edwards	September27
Conor Poholek	September 8	Justin Michael Spray	September28
Michael Wrigglesworth	September 8		
Conor Poholek	September 8		
Robert Young	September10		
Joseph McFadden	September11		
Marybeth Esposito/Herr	September12		
Daniel Souza	September13		
Craig Arsenault	September15		

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED...

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Jeresa June Mincey	October 1	Jason Glatz	October 17
Dexter Hill	October 1	Ryan Patrick Ford	October 17
Gabriella Josie Marin-Rino	October 4	William Potz	October 18
Adam Michael Smith	October 4	Dion Prokop	October 19
Mariyah Miylena Nakhoun	October 5	Masha Robinson	October 19
Michael Scott Lofaro	October 6	Darren Joseph Reidy	October 19
John Stempert	October 6	Allan Barnett Weiner	October 21
Christopher Walling	October 7	Edward "Eddie" Casey	October 22
Jason Walowitz	October 8	Peter Butanowicz	October 26
Rocco Bonavita	October 12	Joseph Kowalczyk Jr.	October 28
Lawrence Morrelli	October 12	Debra Napolitano	October 30
Linda Medina	October 13	Timmy Garofalo	October 30
Jenoe Varga	October 14	Matthew John Evans	October 30
Viviana Rose Cavalli	October 14	Darren Robbins	October 31
James (Tommy) Stuart	October 14		
Lorenzo Z. Deaderick	October 15		
David Ehman	October 17		
Carl Anthony Johnston	October 17		



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

SEPTEMBER ANGELVERSARIES

Kevin Michael Corcoran Jr.	September 1
Graziano Sollenne	September 1
Noel Lucinda Senerchia	Found Sept.3
Vanessa Christina Montes	September 3
Jeremy Saxe	September 4
Shawn Watson	September 5
Richard C. Bennett Jr.	September 5
Brian Watcke	September 5
Phillip Weisgable Jr.	September 5
Sherri A. Munz	September 7
Christopher Walling	September 7
Holly Flannery	September 7
Kylie Flannery	September 7
Nicole Laquesse	September 8
Darren Robbins	September 8
Michael Patrick Gianola	September 9
Matthew Perry	September 11
Gregory Robert Santos	September 11
Christine Ann Soltis	September 13
Paul William Minar	September 14
Michael Roe	September 15
Nova Rae Hayden	September 15
Brian Peter Petruccelli	September 16
Adam Michael Smith	September 16
George Andrew Dirocco	September 21

Melissa Erika Mancini	September 22
Antonio Goncalves	September 22
Kira Michelle Davis	September 22
Seth Roberts	September 23
Brandon Michael Velez	September 23
Linda A. Poppa	September 24
Sean Russell	September 25
Marc Rosen	September 25
Michele Broadley	September 28
Adam Edward Ndreu	September 29
Miles Jon Jenness	September 29

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

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED AND REMEMBERED...

OCTOBER ANGELVERSARIES

...

Valerie F. Poppa	October 2
James (Jamie) Medvegy	October 3
Thomas Patrick Dalling	October 4
Michael Espach	October 4
Deidre Stewart	October 5
Thomas J. Henthorn Jr.	October 5
Johnny Corsa	October 12
Will Ryan	October 13
Scott Nishball	October 14
Robert Carbone	October 14
Joseph Vittorio Jr.	October 16
Dion Prokop	October 16
Leigh Sabo	October 16
Andreas (AJ) Justesen	October 18
Jose A. Suarez	October 18
Douglas C. Cole Jr.	October 19
James Worsham	October 19
Jennifer A. Battista Russo	October 20
Lisa Marie Mancini	October 21
Joseph Conrad Tursi	October 21
Katrell Bohannan	October 23

Matthew Scott Lofaro	October 23
Conor Robert Bowen	October 25
Robert J. Murphy	October 26
Jalyn Francis	October 27
Joey Clancola	October 27
Carmine J. Munz Jr.	October 29
Korey Jordan	October 31



Grief and Resilience Can Walk Together



Grief and emotional resilience are not mutually exclusive. Emotional resilience doesn't mean "bouncing back" to who you were before the death of your child nor does it mean suppressing the pain. Instead, it is the quiet, courageous ability to carry intense sorrow while adapting to change and finding ways to continue engaging with life

Here is how the two intertwine.

1. Emotional resilience allows you to hold space for deep heartbreak while still experiencing moments of joy, gratitude, or simply the ability to complete daily tasks.

2. Experts in grief psychology note that the goal isn't to "get over" loss. Over time, acute grief softens into integrated grief—where your deceased child, grandchild, or sibling is incorporated into your ongoing life.

3. Emotional resilience is not about being “strong.” True resilience entails feeling your emotions, allowing yourself to rest, and accepting the reality of a new normal.

True emotional resilience is your capacity to adapt to loss while honoring your pain. It means developing skills to carry grief without letting it completely overwhelm your ability to function. You’re not trying to return to who you were before. You’re learning to live as someone forever changed by this loss.

Emotional resilience is different from toxic positivity, which pressures you to focus on silver linings or gratitude before you’re ready. Emotional resilience allows space for anger, sadness, and confusion. It develops gradually through small, manageable actions, and gradual transformation.

Building emotional resilience after loss is about developing specific skills that help you process grief while maintaining your capacity to function. This doesn’t mean that you’ve “moved on” or forgotten; it means you’re building resilience by allowing the loss of your child, grandchild, or sibling to coexist with continued living.

The following practices work to strengthen your emotion regulation systems by creating new neural pathways for coping. **Try to accept and express your emotions and not suppress them!** Emotional suppression prolongs grief and increases stress hormones like cortisol. When you allow yourself to feel sadness, anger, or confusion, you activate your brain’s natural processing mechanisms. This doesn’t mean wallowing; it means acknowledging what’s present. Start by naming your emotion out loud and let yourself fully experience what you’re feeling without judgment. If crying feels impossible in the moment, that’s okay, too. The goal is permission not performance. The barrier that

many face is fear that opening the floodgates means losing control. The truth is that emotions typically crest and subside within 90 seconds when they are not resisted.

Maintaining physical self-care is non-negotiable. Grief depletes the body's resources. Sleep deprivation, poor nutrition, and inactivity create a physiological environment where emotional resilience becomes nearly impossible. Exercise regulates cortisol and releases endorphins that buffer against depression.

Creating a grief ritual provides structure when everything feels chaotic. Rituals signal to your brain that you are honoring the loss of the child while moving forward. This might mean lighting a candle each morning or evening, visiting a meaningful place each week, or writing a daily note to your child, grandchild, or sibling. Writing activates different brain regions than thinking alone, helping you to process complex emotions and identify patterns in your grief. Writing for five minutes without editing about what you are feeling, what happened today, or what you wish you could say to your child or to someone else is an important activity to pursue. Over time, reviewing entries reveals progress you can't see day-to-day.

Furthermore, developing self-compassion is vital. When you're navigating loss, treating yourself with kindness isn't just helpful, it's essential for building emotional resilience. Self-compassion means responding to your pain the way you'd comfort a close friend. Research on self-compassion shows this practice reduces emotional distress and supports psychological well-being during difficult times. Self-compassion has three core elements: giving yourself self-kindness instead of harsh judgment, recognizing that suffering is part of being human, and holding painful feelings with mindful awareness rather than over-identifying with them. When you're already overwhelmed, your inner critic can become louder and more punishing. When this is occurring, place your hand over your heart and practice this three-step practice:

1. Acknowledge your pain and say out loud to yourself, "This is a moment of suffering." or "This really hurts."
2. Recognize common humanity by stating, "Loss is part of life." Or "Others have felt this pain, too."
3. Offer yourself kindness by repeating the word, "May I be patient with myself." Or "May I give myself the compassion I need."

Finding support as you build emotional resilience must be part of the process. Loss can feel isolating, but building strong support networks is essential for developing emotional resilience. The challenge is that grief often makes us withdraw at the exact moment we need connection most. When you're grieving, isolation feels protective. You might worry about burdening others, fear being vulnerable, or lack energy for social interaction. But isolation intensifies grief and undermines resilience. Without support, you're more likely to experience prolonged distress, and struggle to process emotions. Connection doesn't erase pain, but it provides the scaffolding you need to rebuild. Professional support can make this process less isolating and more navigable. Licensed therapists understand the complexities of grief and can help you develop personalized coping strategies. A peer to peer support group such as The Compassionate Friends is very helpful, as well. You do not have to navigate grief by yourself. Taking one small step toward support is itself an act of resilience.

Emotional resilient grieving invites you to be an 'active participant' in the [grieving process](#).. Resilience allows the typical physical and emotional responses to grief to be accepted and experienced with courage. It will help you live with purpose and grieve with enduring love at the same time.

