The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

November/December 2026 **Newsletter** Volume 26 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.

"There are places in the heart that do not yet exist. Suffering has to enter in for them to come to be!"
-Leon Bloy

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 10, 2026 6:45 – 8:45 pm

December 8, 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.

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 700
Jenson Beach FL 34957

630-990-0010 877-969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Co-Ordinator

Mary Lemley
203-483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

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

We Need Not Walk Alone!

A Chassidic Tale

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



There is no better way to make a point than to tell a story…..

A man had been wandering in the forest for many days and was nearing the end of his water and food supply. With each passing hour his sense of fear and despair was increasing. His body was weary with fatigue; yet he was unable to sleep.

Slowly it became clear to him that he had been walking in circles and retracing his steps. He knew that his end was near.

Suddenly, in the distance, he noticed the figure of a bedraggled fellow wanderer approaching him. His joy was boundless as he thought to himself, "At last, a way out of this dark and foreboding forest."

The man gathered all of his remaining strength and ran towards the stranger and exclaimed, "My brother, I can't begin to tell you how happy I am to see you. Which way leads out?"

The stranger responded, "My dear friend, I am so sorry to disappoint you, but I too have been wandering in this forest for days on end. I can't save you - I too am looking for a way out."

In a fit of despair the first wanderer shouted, "Then all is lost. It is over. There is no use in continuing," and he fell to his knees in a fit of tears.

The stranger responded in a deeply caring and comforting voice, "My friend, why are you giving up hope? Let us journey together. I will show you the paths I have taken that have led me nowhere, and you will show me the paths you have taken that have not brought you to your destination. **Let us walk together** and find a path home."



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

Or scan this QR Code

Jorge, You were my first child, the one who showed me the miracle of a mother's love. From the moment I held you, everything changed. You taught me how deep love can go and how strong a mother's heart can be.
You were my first reason to stay strong, to hope, and to believe. You will always have a special place in my heart because you were the one who started it all.
I will love you always. ❤️ ***Mom***
Merry Christmas in Heaven



In loving remembrance of
Marshall D. Maxwell
on his Angelversary (11-19-2019)
Always loved, Never forgotten
Marshall Matters!
Love, Mom

Happy Birthday Carlo
We wish more than anything
you were
Here to celebrate with us.
We miss you so very much.
Love you to the moon and back.
With all our hearts,
Mamma & Papa

Happy Birthday Joseph
12/22/82

We miss you every minute
of every day
We love you forevermore
Mom and Dad

Kevin,

We love and miss you so much.
We can't believe it's been two years.
You are forever in our hearts.
With love,
Mom, Dad, Ryan, and Shane

In Honor of my Aunt Sue
&
In Memory of her beloved son
Scott Duke

With Love, Andy McNiel

In memory of my daughter
Lauren, my sweet girl
I know you are singing
with the Angels.
I miss you!
Love, Mom

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.

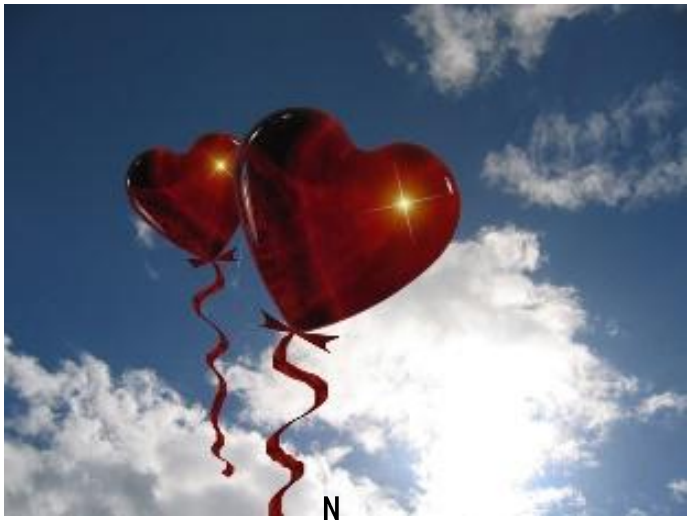
NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Edward Angelo Pipkin	**Nov. 2**
Derick James Springer	**Nov. 2**
Zoe Elizabeth Anyan	**Nov. 3**
Kristin Ann Carveth	**Nov. 4**
Edward Glover	**Nov. 4**
James (Jamey) Guenther Dina	**Nov. 5**
Julian Cerrato	**Nov. 8**
Keith Ronald Berry	**Nov. 9**
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**
Tracy Lynn Hollister	**Nov. 19**
Carlos Carmona	**Nov. 21**
Dy'mond Emmerich Moody	**Nov. 22**
Robert Michael Frouge	**Nov. 24**
James Worsham	**Nov. 25**
Lynette Daniel Swanson	**Nov. 27**
Heather Rose Raro	**Nov. 29**
Kevin Rascoe	**Nov. 30**

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
Daniel Howie Martinez Jr.	Dec. 3
Kevonna Edwards	Dec. 3
Carlo Minasi	Dec. 3
Beverly Bruno	Dec. 4
Dawn Ann Kalman	Dec. 4
Michael Rowley	Dec. 4
Leo Farrell	Dec. 7
Steven Wall	Dec. 9
Evan McNamara Hughes	Dec. 9
Noel Lucina Senerchia	Dec. 10
Joseph Michael Klinko	Dec. 11
Richard C. Bennett Jr.	Dec. 11
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
Christie Lea Ende	Dec. 21
Joshua R. Ehman	Dec. 21
Joseph Anthony Peloso IV	Dec. 22
Nathan Burrows	Dec. 25
Crystal Lynn Hayden	Dec. 26
Aaliyah Gabrielle Dunn	Dec. 26
David Stanczyk	Dec. 27
George W. Juleson IV	Dec. 27
Graziano Sollenne	Dec. 30
Kylie Flannery	Dec. 30
Bobby Bonacci	Dec. 31
John McPadden	Dec. 31
Joshua R. Wright	Dec. 31



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."

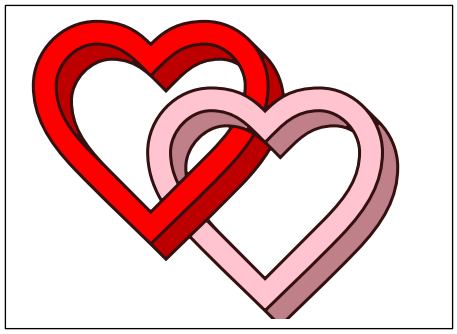
" There is a place that we call
Memory – a province by itself
which, though unseen,
is home and haven
to the heart… and there,
in peace and beauty, waiting,
are those with whom we
shared our yesterdays."

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
Matthew John Evans	Dec. 3
Frank Thomas Frouge	Dec. 4
Evon Edwards	Dec. 4
William Gagliardi	Dec. 5
Aaron Matthew Hoffman	Dec. 7
Halle Root	Dec. 8
Steven Spray	Dec. 8
Ava Jane Howerton	Dec. 8
Mary Beth Esposito/Herr	Dec. 9
Danielle R. Metatos	Dec. 10
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
Rocco Bonavita	Dec. 19
Jovanni Natal	Dec. 21
William Potz	Dec. 23
Brenna McMenamey	Dec. 23
John Patrick Flanagan	Dec. 24
Ethan Thornton	Dec. 24
Joseph David Gagliardi Sr.	Dec. 24
Patrick J. Dubee	Dec. 26
Jennifer Leibowitz Antonier	Dec. 26
John E. Murphy Jr.	Dec. 28
James Blomberg	Dec. 31



Are Holiday Blues and Depression the Same Thing?

The holiday blues, or holiday season-induced depression, is a common experience for many individuals. The main difference between holiday blues and depression is the severity and duration of symptoms.

The holiday blues involve mood changes triggered by seasonal factors such as less sunlight, changes in diet or routine, or alcohol at parties. Symptoms include feeling sad, fatigued, and having trouble sleeping. Somewhat different is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). It's important to note that while the holiday blues and SAD can have overlapping symptoms and occur at similar times, they are not the same disorder. Both can lead to temporary feelings of sadness, loneliness, or stress.

The holiday blues typically refer to a short-term state of sadness, loneliness, or stress that some people may experience during the holiday season due to social pressures, unrealistic expectations, or the absence of loved ones. On the other hand, SAD is a form of depression that is connected to the change of seasons, usually happening during the fall and winter months when there is less sunlight. Symptoms of both conditions can include feeling depressed, sad, tired, having trouble sleeping, and experiencing changes in appetite or mood due to seasonal factors like reduced sunlight, altered diet or routine, or alcohol consumption at parties. Holiday blues are typically short-term feelings of sadness that emerge during specific holiday periods, while SAD is a type of depression that occurs at the same time every year, usually in the fall and winter months.

It's important to note that holiday season-induced depression and clinical depression are not the same condition. Clinical depression is defined by persistent feelings of intense sadness or despair that can significantly disrupt daily life. Other symptoms include feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, and hopelessness, as well as trouble concentrating and remembering details. Depression can also cause insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or sleeping too much and often requires treatment with medication. If you're experiencing any of these feelings, please remember that taking care of your mental health is crucial. Consider scheduling a mental health consultation. *Your well-being matters, and seeking support is essential in caring for yourself while grieving.*

Six Mental Health Tips for Managing the Holiday Blues

While it's important to acknowledge and address feelings associated with the holiday blues, proactive steps can also be taken to promote mental health during the holiday season.

1. Acknowledge your feelings: It's okay not to always feel jolly and festive. Allow yourself to acknowledge any sadness, grief, or stress you may be feeling during the holidays. Being honest with yourself about your emotions is the first step in managing them.

2. Prioritize self-care: This can include maintaining a regular sleep schedule, eating nutritious meals, and setting aside time for physical activity. Engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation, such as reading a good book, taking a long bath, or practicing meditation, can benefit mental well-being and empower you to take control of your mental health during the holiday season. Limiting alcohol use, watching your diet, and limiting social media can also help minimize the blues.

3. Build a support system: Fostering meaningful connections with family and friends through in-person gatherings, phone calls, or video chats can help combat feelings of isolation. You can initiate conversations about shared interests or memories or plan activities like a virtual game night or a movie marathon. Additionally, volunteering or participating in acts of kindness within the community can boost mood and provide a sense of purpose.

4. Be realistic: Setting expectations and boundaries is key to managing holiday-related stress. It's okay to say no to certain commitments and prioritize activities that align with personal values and well-being. Creating a budget for gift-giving and festivities can alleviate financial strain and reduce anxiety.

5. Create new traditions: If the holidays bring up difficult memories, consider creating new traditions that bring you happiness. Whether volunteering, trying out a new activity, or simply spending time with people who lift your spirits, creating new traditions can help shift your focus to positive experiences.

6. Talk with a counselor: For individuals grieving the loss of a loved one or coping with complex family dynamics, the holiday season can be incredibly challenging. Seeking support from a therapist, counselor, or support group can provide a safe space to process emotions and gain coping strategies.

These strategies promote emotional resilience, foster a sense of balance and centeredness, and can help individuals experience a more fulfilling and joyful holiday season. They can also positively influence interactions with friends and family, leading to deeper connections. Most importantly, these strategies can help shift the perspective from what is missing during the holidays to what is present, effectively reducing feelings of loss or sadness and countering the feelings of helplessness during the holiday season.