



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

May & June 2021

Newsletter

Volume 21 No.5 & 6

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.

Founded in England in 1969, TCF was established in the United States in 1972. Presently, under the provision of the not-for-profit national organization, there are more than 550 active chapters in operation throughout the United States.

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 faith in a life after death, in a brighter world where dear ones will meet again - only that and the measured tramp of time can give consolation."

-Winston Churchill

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:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
P.O. Box 112
Stratford, CT 06615

National Office Address
The Compassionate Friends
48660 Pontiac Trail #930805
Wixom, MI 48393
(630)990-0010 (877)969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Co-ordinator
Mary Lemley
203 483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

Monthly Meetings

Due to Governor Lamont's lessening of the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steering Committee of the Bridgeport/Stratford, TCF Chapter has decided to resume in-person meetings at Sterling House Community Center, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT06615 beginning in May 2021. Reservations for attending will need to be made. Social distancing and wearing a mask will be required. Information will be sent out to all members.

The in-person meetings will be televised virtually on Zoom. On the day of the meeting, you will be receiving an email with instructions on how to log on and join the meeting on the app Zoom or from your phone.

Date: Second Tuesday of each month
(May 11, 2021 & June 8, 2021)

Time: 6:45 pm - 7:45 pm

Place: Sterling House & Virtual Reality
through Zoom or phone

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and contact us at: contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Co-Leaders

Dr. Charles Kochan and Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Secretary

Janet Spray

Treasurer

Leslie Minasi

Website Co-ordinator

Leslie Minasi

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso

Resource Facilitator

Anne Castaldo

Zoom Co-ordinator

Kristen Cable

Bridgeport Chapter's New E-Mail Address:

contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:

www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:

www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

Editor's Notes

Tidings of Peace are sent to you during these two very important yet difficult months. May and June were once months that we looked forward to with great anticipation. There were so many events with weddings, graduations, and confirmations to celebrate. We all know how difficult and heart breaking these events can be since we no longer have our beloved children by our sides.

Yet, as we also know these events continue to occur, and we are asked to participate in them. For the newly bereaved it is certainly correct and permissible to decline the invitation; for those who have started on the journey, a short stay at the party may be the answer, and for those who have traveled the road for a longer time, the parties may bring laughter, joy, and fellowship.

May and June also include Mother's Day, Father's Day, and in some church congregations Children's Day. No matter where we are on the journey, these days will always be challenging. Others before us, many others, have felt the pain, struggled with the same questions, and reluctantly have given up the lives they too had envisioned for themselves and for their children.

In early February, 1862, William Wallace Lincoln, the 12-year old son of President Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd, contracted a slight chill. At first the illness appeared to be minor, but within a few days the boy's condition worsened. His body was wracked with fever, probably as a result of malaria, and on February 20, young Willie died. His mother's grief was inconsolable. For months, she lay prostrate and stunned. In her

letter she poured out her emotions: "Our home is very beautiful, the grounds around us are enchanting, the world still smiles and pays homage, yet the charm is dispelled-everything appears a mockery...We are left desolate... My question to myself is can life be endured?"

Our answer to Mary Todd is yes; it must be endured; and as we continue onwards, life is tolerated, and way down the road, life can even become enjoyable once again. It is obvious that we certainly do not walk alone. There are many prominent people who were once as devastated as we, yet found the courage to stay productive in the world. For example, Winston Churchill and Samuel Clemens both lost daughters and Robert Frost lost four of his children. That Robert Frost was able to get out of bed each morning, let alone write notable poetry, is nothing short of inspiring. And it's this kind of *inspiration-inspiration by positive example*-that may prove most healing for us.

It does indeed take great courage to put one foot in front of each other as we travel along; but none of us would ever change the fact that our beloved children were ours for what ever time they were with us. So in these months of celebrations, let us celebrate the love we will always have for our children. We will always be our children's mother and father, and if they were still with us they would be thanking us for being their mother and father.

Although tears will fall, may Mother's Day and Father's Day be soaked with loving memories of our children and their love for us.

*Taking one step at a time,
Claudia Margitay-Balogh*

GRIEVING HEALING GROWING

Closure: Is it a Reality?

The use of the word "closure" is often heard in public circles or in the media especially after a tragedy and implies finality. The word comes with the sense that there will be a time, day, or event like a funeral that marks when a grieving person will be "healed" or "over it", as though it were a disease and you could magically take a pill to be cured. There is an expectation that when the eulogies are said and the casseroles are gone, the grief somehow magically goes away. *The truth is that those of us who are in TCF realize that the death of a child or sibling changes our lives forever, and we will never truly "be over it".*

Yes, we will not have the intensity of the pain and sorrow we had at the beginning of our grief. We will go on with life and find a new normal for us, but life will never be as it was before the death, and we will never be fully "healed". Sometimes those around us have attempted to comfort us by pointing to deadlines, replacements, or "at leasts". We have heard it said, "At least you have other kids", or "You can have another baby", or "Hasn't it been 6 months?" Many see "comfort giving" as a short-term support effort, and soon we will be "over it" as we are kept busy returning to the tasks of daily living and focussing on our blessings. These comments hurt rather than provide the comfort they are meant to provide. Grief follows no plan, no stages, timetable, formula, or schedule. There are no road maps; there are no absolutes.

We learn in TCF that everyone grieves differently. Grief is like being lost. The familiar things we relied on to live each day are gone. We must find new anchors or stabilizers along the way and learn a new way of relating to the world and people around us. We are forced to live without our child or sibling. The reality of our loss often far outweighs what we have remaining. Grief is all consuming, distorts reality, and we begin to mark time in "before or after our loved one died". No one can hurry the process of grief; no one can do it for us. Not even our spouses, parents, or other children can help us in those early days. The truth is that when our grief is new, we feel exhausted physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We barely have enough energy to breathe.

We feel as though we have no control over our lives anymore, nor do we care. We realize on some level we are helpless. We might even feel hopeless or purposeless. Some of us feel isolated, lonely, and misunderstood. Some feel like everything is trivia compared to the loss we have experienced. Some feel as if the world is spinning on around us, and nobody really cares that our child, sibling, or grandchild died. All of these feelings are normal and part of the grieving process. *And yes, we also need to realize it is a process—a very long, gradual and difficult process.* Time does not heal all wounds, but time softens the intensity of the grief. What helps is finding those who will listen with their hearts and give us hope and understanding. Those who will spend hours, days, and months with us as we tell our story over and over so we can somehow believe it ourselves. What helps is to surround ourselves with those patient people and meaningful activities that comfort and support.

Gradually, the cold darkness of grief begins to give way to the warmth of the memories, acceptance, purpose, and reinvestment in life. We learn to speak of our loved one without crying, and to begin to accept that whatever time we had with him or her, we would have taken even if just but a moment. We learn that grief is the price we pay for loving our child or sibling so much, and we wouldn't want it any other way. Our relationships with family, friends, and yes, even God can be strengthened or challenged as we look for new ways to connect with them. We may lose old friends who don't really understand. We learn that problems in life are not overwhelming. We are handling the worst thing that can happen to us; what else can happen? We learn to more deeply cherish those we love. We help others in grief without batting an eye. Sometimes we pick up "gifts" along the way by becoming more caring, compassionate toward others, and appreciative for what is important in life. New strengths can develop as we find our new selves along the way. Life will be different as we learn to cope, but still have meaning.

For those of you who are new in your loss, we hope that you will continue to share your sorrow with us and learn from those further ahead on the path of grief. Someday it won't hurt as much as it does now, and you won't always feel "this elephant on your chest". We encourage you to ask the family and friends around you for what you need and tell them when their expectations for you are too high. We hope you will explain to them that your grief is not on a timetable and will probably not ever reach what society calls "closure". Explain to them that you will always miss your child or sibling, but you will learn to live with a broken heart. We hope you will inform them that the mention of your child's name is music to your ears and it's okay to talk about him or her. Your TCF friends will be with you and hold your hand every step of the way.

Carole J. Dyck, RN
Summer 2003
We Need Not Walk Alone

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

We all know how difficult these special days - Birthdays and Death Anniversaries - can be. This feature in our newsletter helps us to be aware of who is facing these special days each month. We ask that you keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing such dates during May and June in your thoughts and in your hearts.

JOSEPH SALOMONE	May 1
CHARLES PATAKY	May 1
PAUL-JOHN HERON	May 1
JAMES HRZIC	May 2
KAREN BRUNO	May 3
AMBER KINGERSKY	May 3
BRIAN MICHAEL CANCELLIERI	May 4
DANNY MURPHY	May 5
CARL R. WENNERSTRAND TALBOT	May 5
SHAUN DOWD	May 6
WILLIAM MARIANO VARGAS	May 7
NINA TERESA POETA	May 9
KENNETH A. BARTEK, JR. (KJ)	May 9
PATRICK J. DUBEE	May 11
JEREMY COLLINS	May 12
WILLIAM A BAKER IV	May 13
CONOR ROBERT BOWEN	May 13
BRIAN TUZIK	May 14
JON MALONE	May 16
JOEL ALEXIS NIEVES	May 17
JOSE A. SUAREZ	May 18
JAMES CARBONE	May 20
DAVID JOHN O'HARE	May 20
JESSICA BURROWS	May 20
DENISE PIETROWSKI	May 22
RONNIE HILL	May 23
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL TOKARSKI, JR.	May 24
SABINA ELIZABETH CECCARELLI	May 25
HERB GULLBERG IV	May 25
NEIL HEILWEIL	May 25
WILLIAM J. SAVO	May 26
CURTIS BUCCI	May 26
BRIAN LANEUVILLE	May 27
JESSIE EBSTEIN	May 27
RYAN EDWARD SIMPSON	May 27
JENNIFER D. GUSTAFSON	May 28
BRYCE LEO COSTAWONG	May 28
SHAWN WATSON	May 29
JOSEPH DONALD "TREY" WARREN III	May 30
FRANCIS APGAR	May 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.*

ETHAN THORNTON	June 2
WILLIAM GAGLIARDI	June 2
STEPHEN JOSEPH MEDEIROS	June 4
CHRISTOPHER ROBERT ETES	June 5
JONATHAN SIMKO	June 5
JOHN SCINTO	June 6
CHERYL PETRETTI	June 9
SUSAN WOLSSNER	June 10
TORIN GREGORY BOND	June 11
JENNIFER LEIBOWITZ ANTONIER	June 11
JOHN SAMUEL SMITH	June 11
RON CRISTIANO	June 12
BRIAN PETER PETRUCCELLI	June 12
MARGARITA B. RAMOS	June 13
EDWARD J. STAMPER IV	June 15
KATIE FONTNEAU	June 18
BRIAN CASTRILLON	June 18
ADAM EDWARD NDREU	June 18
ANNETTE KEMENZA	June 20
HALLE ROOT	June 20
HOLLY FLANNERY	June 22
ANGELINA JOY PEARSON	June 22
JORDAN PIERSON	June 22
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL McETTRICK	June 23
ROGER NEALLEY	June 26
JAFAR KARZOUN	June 30
JOSEPH DAVID GAGLIARDI SR.	June 30



BIRTHDAYS



Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

JAFAR KARZOUN	May 1	RONALD ALLEN, JR.	May 30
MICHAEL JOSEPH HURTA	May 2	CRYSTAL LYNN HAYDEN	May 30
KATHLEEN ELLEEN BAYE	May 3	JUSTIN JOSEPH MARGITAY-BALOGH	May 31
KAREN BRUNO	May 4	LAWRENCE MORRELLI	May 31
STEVEN WALL	May 5		
ERIC DAVID JOHNSON	May 6	JOSEPH SALOMONE	June 1
CHRISTOPHER REYES PEREZ	May 6	SCOTT McCLENATHAN	June 2
JEREMY COLLINS	May 7	PETER RONALD RADZWILLAS	June 2
BRYCE LEO COSTAWONG	May 7	CHRIS LEAHY	June 4
DAVID E. CILENTO	May 8	FRANCIS APGAR	June 6
CARL ANTHONY JOHNSTON	May 9	ADELE ADESUWA IYAMU	June 7
JEREMIAH S. SALVATORE	May 9	JONATHAN SIMKO	June 7
DERICK JAMES SPRINGER	May 10	BARBARA YOUNG	June 8
BRIDGET GRACE CABLE	May 10	HOWIE TASSITANO	June 10
EDWARD J. STAMPER IV	May 11	JESSIE EBSTEIN	June 10
WILLIAM (BILLY) A. SLOSSAR	May 12	NEIL HEILWEIL	June 11
RYAN THOMAS WALSH	May 13	Senior Airman LAWRENCE P. MAN LAPIT IV	June 16
CHRISTOPHER PAPP	May 14	STEVEN C. BELENCHIA	June 17
EDWARD ANGELO PIPKIN	May 15	ASHLEY JOY	June 17
TIARRA WEB	May 15	JOSEPH ANTHONY PELOSO IV	June 18
JOSEPH DONALD "TREY" WARREN III	May 16	ALAN RICHARD HOFFMAN, SR.	June 20
SEAN GARRETT RICE	May 16	ANNA MARIA RINO	June 22
TORIN GREGORY BOND	May 16	GABRIELLA JOSIE MARIA RINO	June 22
JASON GLATZ	May 17	SEAN EAREL	June 23
ROBERT YOUNG	May 17	DANNY STEIN	June 25
DAVID SAMPSON	May 17	STEPHEN F. ZURAW	June 25
DANIEL LAWRENCE TOOLE	May 18	ROGER NEALLEY, JR.	June 26
PETER BRADFORD KOVACS	May 19	BRIAN CASTRILLON	June 28
TATE ARLETTA SCHEER	May 19	JOANN SIMKO FASANELLA	June 28
SARAH CYNTHIA KOURY	May 20	DAVID JOHN O'HARE	June 29
PETER BUTANOWICZ	May 22	ANDREW JAMES DONNELLAN	June 29
JOHN BRADY CHAPIN	May 24	JUSTIN SMITH	June 29
DAVID MICHAEL VOGT	May 26	RICHARD ELIOT BONOSKY	June 30
JOAN P. BURBY TELLONE	May 27	STEPHEN JOSEPH MEDEIROS	June 30
MELISSA STUPAK MONTUORI	May 27	LORI ARGONESE	June 30
KASANDRA SANDERS	May 28		
DANIEL QUIRK	May 28		
MARISSA NICOLE ARGUETA	May 29		
CRAIG ARSENAULT	May 29		
BRIAN LANEUVILLE	May 29		

ANGELVERSARIES



Love Gifts

A "Love Gift" is a gift of money to The Compassionate Friends Local Chapter. It is usually in honor of a child who has died. It can also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died. It can also be a gift of thanks that their own children are alive and well or simply a gift from someone who wants to help in the work of our chapter. There are no fees or dues to belong to The Compassionate Friends. As parents and others find hope and healing within the group, they sometimes make a "Love Gift" to our chapter. "Love Gifts" allow us to offer resources such as this newsletter, our website, books, and brochures 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 the law. *The Compassionate Friends is a registered 501(c) (3) organization.* Please send your request and check to our treasurer at:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter

c/o Leslie Minasi,
P.O. Box 112, Stratford, CT 06615

Please make out "Love Gift" checks to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter.

Each year, Mrs. Irene Kostzewski from Stratford, CT chooses a non-profit organization for her Lenten fund-raising mission. Her outreach to her friends this year for the Bridgeport Chapter not only helped spread the word about our chapter of The Compassionate Friends, but the \$500.00 that was donated will greatly help in our important work. The love and generosity which prompted this gift is greatly appreciated. We thank all of the people who helped Mrs. Kostzewski reach her goal.

Beverly Benedetto
Christine Biesadecki
Josephine Burns
Anna Delahunt
Kathleen Dolyak
Lorraine Faiella

Barbara Fennell
Nancy Foote
Mercy Ingersoll
Irene Kostzewski
Janelle Marchini
Theresa Palmieri
Jo Peschell

Dan Piroscavo
Carolyn Puchowicz
Patricia Rood
Elaine Sansonetti
Amy Stavola
Mary Ellen Williamson
Arlene Wojnarowski

Lilacs

Come, look at May with me,
The world is music.
The lilacs laugh
and every meadow sings.

Your heart forgets to think
of spring or summer,
forgets the grief
that happened in the snow.

Until a memory
moves into sunlight
to bring the child,
the child who is not here.

Still, look at May with me
and hear the music
And - for a moment-
hear the lilacs weep.

-Sascha Wagner

THOUGHTS FROM A MOTHER

LOVE SURVIVES

From the time we are born, we recognize and respond to love. We begin then to give others love in return. As long as we can love and be loved, we can find life's true meaning.

Love is eternal. Love is that thing in life that makes it worth living. Love is that energy or force that survives in spirit even after physical death.

When we lose a loved one, especially one of our children, we know for sure that love remains. It doesn't die in that physical death. We long for the physical presence of the person we can no longer see or touch, but we know they are with us spiritually because we still feel the presence of their

love for us and feel our love for them as strong as ever.

Grief and pain over a loved one's death is a sign of the love we shared. Once we can acknowledge the loss as a physical one only and realize that love has spiritually survived, it gives us great comfort in our grief. Nothing ever completely erases the pain of grief because of the memories we have of the physical presence of that loved one and the longing to have it back. But it helps to realize that all is not lost since that love continues to be felt; it still exists.

*Barbara Lineberger
Piedmont Chapter of TCF
Concord, North Carolina*

THOUGHTS FROM A FATHER

Though you are gone, you are more
than a memory,

There is reality and presence in
your voice echoing from the past.

Tender moments recall emotions
tinged in joy and free of pain.

You stride my spirit journey,
a talisman of hope along the way.

The grave has not confined you,
Nor have I buried you in the solitude
of private dreams.

I sense your spirit free, soaring
outside my mortal gaze.

Yet still in sight to an inner view that
Knows already the gladness of reunion.

Your sojourn here was etched in sharing
and closeness.

More than the sad benediction I believed
but months ago.

Make no mistake.

If a way there was to bring you back,
to hold you again,

I would stop the music of goodbye and
replay scores of welcome.

But, I cannot, nor will I be able tomorrow.
Thus do I take the harmony of our lives
and play it still,

You in me and I in you, son-father,
father-son.

The time between us lengthens behind
and shortens ahead.

I can measure the past but not the future,
And endings may come abruptly.

I am forearmed, with words of greeting
Engraved already upon my soul.

At transition I will seek your hand.

Join me, son, at the dawn of my
own new day.

I'll be looking for you.

*Don Hackett
TCF Hingham, MA*

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Compassionate Friends 2021 Virtual National Conference July 16-18, 2021

The Compassionate Friends' 2021 National Conference was scheduled to be held in Detroit, Michigan this July. The Board of Directors have been actively watching national developments and considering the many issues that are involved for determining how to proceed. As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to have strict restrictions for large gatherings, a difficult decision was made to cancel the in-person conference in Detroit.

The Board recognizes how disappointing this may be to the many members in our TCF family as it is to all of the staff and Board of Directors. A lot of thought and consideration was given to this decision, and a number of factors were evaluated before making a final determination.

The most important consideration was whether we could ensure the safety of our members with the continuing risks and uncertainty of travel and group gatherings. Limitations within the hotel as well as the state's mandates made this year's in-person conference an impossibility.

When National canceled last year's conference for the first in 43 years, a virtual conference was created. With the support of many TCF volunteers working alongside TCF staff and the TCF Board of Directors, a very successful experience occurred.

Over 1,000 participants who needed support attended last year and had an opportunity for connection. Taking all that was learned, this

year's virtual conference staff will build on last year's experience to ensure another successful virtual conference.

We share your disappointment that more time will be needed before we can come together in-person again.

More details about TCF's three-day virtual conference including the number of sessions, registration prices, and earlybird prices will be posted on National's website in the near future.

**For now SAVE the DATE!!
July 16 -18, 2021**

Comments from the 2020 Virtual Conference

"The Conference meant so much to me. It was beautifully presented. I will always be grateful that I was able to attend." - 2020 Virtual Conference Attendee

"I am very grateful for all your hard work putting together such an amazing 3 day event. I am newly bereaved and this conference was that ray of sunshine that I needed. The Compassionate Friends conference has given me tools that I didn't even know I needed to help me ease some of this pain in my heart." - 2020 Virtual Attendee

-Roy Davies
Board President
on behalf of the Board of Directors

As Tolstoy wrote, "Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow; but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them."

Remember that as painful as grief may be at a given moment, that emotion can never be stronger than the love that was there first; that love is still there and can be a source of strength. Love comes before grief... ...And love will be there after