



# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September & October 2022      Newsletter      Volume 22 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.

*"When it seems that our sorrow is too great to be borne, let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grief has given us entrance, and inevitably, we will feel about us arms, their sympathy, their understanding."* Helen Keller

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](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

**Regional Co-ordinator**  
Mary Lemley  
203 483-9935  
[Mklem43@aol.com](mailto:Mklem43@aol.com)

## Monthly Meetings

As we continue through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Steering Committee of our chapter will monitor the situation and adhere to the Governor's mandates. Presently, we will continue to have **in-person meetings at the Sterling House Community Center, 2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT06615.** Wearing masks is optional. **The in-person meetings will no longer be televised virtually on Zoom due to inadequate attendance.**

**Date:** Second Tuesday of each month  
**September 13, 2022 & October 10, 2022**

**Time:** 6:45 pm - 8:45 pm

**Place:** Sterling House

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

**Please bring a non-perishable food item for the food pantry.**

## 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](mailto:contact@tcf-bridgeport.org)**

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:  
**[www.tcf-bridgeport.org](http://www.tcf-bridgeport.org)**

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:  
[www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter](http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter)

# Grieving, Healing, Growing...

## Days of Pain and Glory

September officially marks the end of summer. Though we have hardly had time to pack up the beach balls and bathing suits, many of us are already preparing to face the next onslaught of activities and different holiday demands. The warm and lazy days of sun and fun have given way to the resuming of back-to-school and back-to-work activities and responsibilities.

Our special days of pain and glory seem to be focused in neon as we anticipate birthdays, anniversaries, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Halloween, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and finally a New Year. The absence of our loved one is even more glaring when we are obligated to participate in these celebrations.

Autumn's often, frantic demands of activity, accompanied by chilly winds, shorter days, and longer, colder nights also can leave us weary and depressed.

**STOP** for a moment and make a conscious, deliberate effort to establish priorities. Energy is at a premium, and we must intelligently decide what is really important and what can be set-aside for later (or never!). We can decide not to become the victims of people who do not understand our situations and who pressure us to be or do that for which we are not adequately prepared. We have the right to guard our minds, bodies, and souls according to our own evaluation of our resources.

**LOOK** for the unique and delicious beauty that surrounds us during this autumn time. As the life/death/life cycle of nature unfolds before us once again, let's remember that nature is teaching us that nothing really ends, and nothing is ever wasted.

Fall prepares us for the hibernation of winter, but it offers us majestic beauty in the process. We are presented with a panorama of rich, jewel colors that are not matched in any other season. As drier, crisper air prompts us to build crackling fires, we snuggle together for warmth and companionship. More of our interests are now focused indoors, and our togetherness is

an opportunity to look again at relationships that are still alive and may need some tender care!

Ripened crops are harvested, and bountiful tables remind us that food is more than just basic nourishment. It is symbolic of the enjoyment and satisfaction that was always intended to accompany our most primary needs. Logs burning in a friendly fireplace, marshmallows dancing on hot chocolate, and apple cider and fresh donuts create some of the special fragrances of fall-

reminders that we were meant to enjoy our lives! We will discover peace and joy once again.

**LISTEN** for sounds of hope and encouragement. Let's relax and allow the "still, small voice" inside to guide and direct our souls and spirits. Hope is not gone, but it can be drowned out by the cacophony of busyness. Whatever your spiritual orientation, take time out to be still on the inside. Many are seeking signs of affirmation that their loved one is at peace, but sometimes we are distracted from the very signs we seek.

I once heard in a sermon that circumstances are like a feather bed. They are wonderful if you're on the top of them, but they can smother you if you get underneath them.

It's up to us whether we discover or miss the beauty of our world in the midst of our pain. The pain will be there anyway, and the demands on our time and energy will not go away either. Hopefully, we can gather to ourselves enough strength to make the beauty around us as comforting to our hearts as possible.

*By Andrea Gambill  
Bereavement Magazine  
September 1993*

.....  
\*  
\* *I cried in my car, and was ignored.* \*  
\* *I cried in church, and was pitied.* \*  
\* *I cried at work, and was shunned* \*  
\* *I cried at home, and was hushed.* \*  
\* *I cried at The Compassionate Friends,* \*  
\* *And others shared their tissues* \*  
\* *& tears.* \*  
\* *Nona Walser* \*  
\* *Greenville, SC Chapter TCF* \*  
.....

# 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 pay for 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 the law.

*The Compassionate Friends is a registered 501(c) (3) organization.*

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter  
c/o Leslie Minasi,

P.O. Box 112, Stratford, CT 06615  
Please make out the check to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter.

Since the newsletter is published 6 times a year, please note that if you want to commemorate a birthday or anniversary in the exact month, **please send the love gift in advance.** All love gifts will be acknowledged as promptly as possible. The chapter leadership is grateful for your contributions of any amount.

## Words to Comfort, Words to Heal

I am standing upon that foreshore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come down to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says, "There! She's gone!" "Gone where?" "Gone from my sight, that's all"

She is just as large in mast and spar and hull as ever she was when she left my side; just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at that moment when someone at my side says, "There! She's gone!", there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she comes!" And that is dying.

*-Victor Hugo from Toilers of the Sea*

In honor of  
**Kevin Michael Kochan**  
for his angel day  
With love,  
from his parents

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

*-Alan Pedersen*

### TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Message \_\_\_\_\_  
Love Gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Thank you!

# 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 September and October in your thoughts and in your hearts.

|                               |              |                            |            |
|-------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|------------|
| DARRELL BENNETT               | September 2  | JERESA JUNE MINCEY         | October 1  |
| SINCERE PETTWAY               | September 2  | DEXTER HILL                | October 1  |
| CHRISTOPHER R. VIERA          | September 3  | GABRIELLA JOSIE MARIN-RINO | October 4  |
| VANESSA CHRISTINA MONTES      | September 3  | ADAM MICHAEL SMITH         | October 4  |
| JOSEPH VITTORIO, JR           | September 4  | MARIYAH MIYLENA NAKHOUNE   | October 5  |
| SCOTT NISHBALL                | September 4  | MICHAEL SCOTT LOFARO       | October 6  |
| STEFANA MONHOLLEN             | September 5  | CHRISTOPHER WALLING        | October 7  |
| DANIELLE R. METATOS           | September 6  | JASON WALOWITZ             | October 8  |
| JOSEPH CONRAD TURSI           | September 6  | ROCCO BONAVITA             | October 12 |
| MICHAEL JAMES JR.             | September 7  | LAWRENCE MORRELLI          | October 12 |
| NICOLE LAQUESSE               | September 7  | LINDA MEDINA               | October 13 |
| CHUCKIE ROTOLO                | September 8  | JENOE VARGA                | October 14 |
| DAVID E. CILENTO              | September 8  | VIVIANA ROSE CAVALLI       | October 14 |
| MICHAEL WRIGGLESWORTH         | September 8  | JAMES (TOMMY) STUART       | October 14 |
| ROBERT YOUNG                  | September 10 | LORENZO Z. DEADERICK       | October 15 |
| JOSEPH MCFADDEN               | September 11 | DAVID EHMAN                | October 17 |
| MARYBETH ESPOSITO/HERR        | September 12 | CARL ANTHONY JOHNSTON      | October 17 |
| DANIEL SOUZA                  | September 13 | JASON GLATZ                | October 17 |
| CRAIG ARSENAULT               | September 15 | RYAN PATRICK FORD          | October 17 |
| WILL RYAN                     | September 16 | WILLIAM POTZ               | October 18 |
| ROBERT CARBONE                | September 17 | DION PROKOP                | October 19 |
| JONAS BLACKWELL               | September 17 | MASHA ROBINSON             | October 19 |
| DAVID SAMPSON                 | September 19 | ALLAN BARNETT WEINER       | October 21 |
| TEVIN GORDON                  | September 19 | PETER BUTANOWICZ           | October 26 |
| VINNIE MALIANO                | September 20 | JOSEPH KOWALCZYK, JR.      | October 28 |
| ALEX PAUL FAKHOURY            | September 20 | DEBRA NAPOLITANO           | October 30 |
| ERIK JASON DOBYNS             | September 21 | TIMMY GAROFALO             | October 30 |
| STEPHEN F. ZURAW              | September 22 | MATTHEW JOHN EVANS         | October 30 |
| JUSTIN JOSEPH MARGITAY-BALOGH | September 25 | DARREN ROBBINS             | October 31 |
| ROBERT SMUNIEWSKI             | September 25 |                            |            |
| ANTHONY EDWARDS               | September 27 |                            |            |
| JUSTIN MICHAEL SPRAY          | September 28 |                            |            |

## BIRTHDAYS

*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...

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

|                          |               |                            |            |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------|
| GRAZIANO SOLLENNE        | September 1   | VALERIE F. POPPA           | October 2  |
| NOEL LUCINDA SENERCHIA   | Found Sept. 3 | JAMES (Jamie) MEDVEGY      | October 3  |
| VANESSA CHRISTINA MONTES | September 3   | THOMAS PATRICK DALLING     | October 4  |
| JEREMY SAXE              | September 4   | MICHAEL ESPACH             | October 4  |
| SHAWN WATSON             | September 5   | DEIDRE STEWART             | October 5  |
| RICHARD C. BENNETT, JR.  | September 5   | THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.     | October 5  |
| BRIAN WATCKE             | September 5   | JOHNNY CORSA               | October 12 |
| SHERRI A. MUNZ           | September 7   | WILL RYAN                  | October 13 |
| CHRISTOPHER WALLING      | September 7   | SCOTT NISHBALL             | October 14 |
| HOLLY FLANNERY           | September 7   | ROBERT CARBONE             | October 14 |
| KYLIE FLANNERY           | September 7   | JOSEPH VITTORIO, JR.       | October 16 |
| NICOLE LAQUESSE          | September 8   | DION PROKOP                | October 16 |
| DARREN ROBBINS           | September 8   | LEIGH SABO                 | October 16 |
| MICHAEL PATRICK GIANOLA  | September 9   | ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN      | October 18 |
| MATTHEW PERRY            | September 11  | JOSE A. SUAREZ             | October 18 |
| GREGORY ROBERT SANTOS    | September 11  | DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.       | October 19 |
| CHRISTINE ANN SOLTIS     | September 13  | JAMES WORSHAM              | October 19 |
| PAUL WILLIAM MINAR       | September 14  | JENNIFER A. BATTISTA RUSSO | October 20 |
| MICHAEL ROE              | September 15  | LISA MARIE MANCINI         | October 21 |
| BRIAN PETER PETRUCCELLI  | September 16  | JOSEPH CONRAD TURSI        | October 21 |
| ADAM MICHAEL SMITH       | September 16  | KATRELL BOHANNAN           | October 23 |
| GEORGE ANDREW DIROCCO    | September 21  | MATTHEW SCOTT LOFARO       | October 23 |
| MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI    | September 22  | CONOR ROBERT BOWEN         | October 25 |
| ANTONIO GONCALVES        | September 22  | ROBERT J. MURPHY           | October 26 |
| KIRA MICHELLE DAVIS      | September 22  | JALYN FRANCIS              | October 27 |
| SETH ROBERTS             | September 23  | JOEY CLANCOLA              | October 27 |
| BRANDON MICHAEL VELEZ    | September 23  | CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.       | October 29 |
| LINDA A. POPPA           | September 24  | KOREY JORDAN               | October 31 |
| SEAN RUSSELL             | September 25  |                            |            |
| MARC ROSEN               | September 25  |                            |            |
| MICHELE BROADLEY         | September 28  |                            |            |
| ADAM EDWARD NDREU        | September 29  |                            |            |
| MILES JON JENNESS        | September 29  |                            |            |

## Angelversaries

# Compassionate Wisdom

## ***TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES***

A lot of this is really common sense, but we are not thinking with common sense in the early days of the loss of our child!!

These are both common sense things and also what worked for me; involve your **healthcare provider** early on!

- You must **nourish** yourself, as hard as it may be, please eat and drink fluids, does not have to be healthy foods in beginning, just nourishment
- **Sleep:** oh so elusive, still is for me; trying your best to settle down in evening, avoid too much “noisy” time on TV, computers or phones before bed, please take naps if you can.
- Need **time off from work** in beginning, to devote your time to survival; for me, going back to work helped *distract from the pain, for others is too difficult*. Most employers understand but the standard 3 days paid time off is near ridiculous; talk with employer to get what time you will need to be able to return to work, albeit a “showing up” at first. It takes time time time to perform on the job, so work with HR and your bosses!
- **Vitamins** may help supplement what you will miss in the disjointed eating habits early on
- **Driving:** *use extreme care to go slow and carefully, need to be clear and so easy to go off focus*. Think of yourself and others on the road. (many of us here have spoken of how they got from A to B and don't remember how they did it.)
- **Reach out** to family and close friends who will listen to you talk, not good to hold all the raw emotions inside. It is ok to **Cry**; need to release as much toxic thinking and emotions and chemicals as you reasonably can
- **TIME:** careful here, as time goes on, it will get softer, but different rates for *different people*; and as Claudia has discussed in the past, **Triggers** will be all around us, deep breaths and let them pass through you.
- **Seek Help** from your healthcare provider; if they do not “get it” keep looking for support groups, online help, again close friends. **DO NOT** self-medicate with alcohol, medications, drugs unless under guidance, it will only make things far worse in the long run.
- **Fresh air** can help, also a hobby, maybe gardening, walking, drawing, music, crafts... whatever you find a tiny bit of pleasure in, and yes it is OK to find pleasure in life again; our children want us to carry on and not see us suffer in the life we have left here. Make the most of our time to do good for ourselves first, and later for others. This is the very concept of supports groups like ours.

This is about all I have, most of it worked for me, find what works for you, and share with us anything you have learned that may help somebody else here in compassionate friends.

Wishing you peace and healing on this toughest of all journeys we will ever face, Charles

*Dr. Charles Kochan, Internal Medicine Physician and  
Father of Kevin who left us at age 22 in 2008  
TCF Bridgeport, CT Chapter*

## Do You Often Take Fresh Flowers To Your Child's Grave?

Are you one of those parents who have a compulsion to take fresh, beautiful flowers to your child's grave every week? I must confess, I was one of those parents.

As a matter of fact, I had to pass the cemetery every day to and from my place of employment. My compulsion dictated that I stop each morning and evening to visit my child's grave. I knew every blade of grass around the monument, and I kept close tabs on the water level in the vase that held the flowers. This went on for the first year after my child died. I suppose it had to do with my maternal nurturing: seeking the only outlet it had -- cleaning and weeding and bringing fresh flowers to my child's grave.

Sometimes within the second year of my bereavement, I found that I could only crane my neck to look as I passed the cemetery each day. I began to bring the flowers less frequently and noticed I didn't wince when the caretakers removed the dead, dried flowers and turned the vase upside down in its holder.

Gradually, I believe, acceptance and recovery entered my grief process. With recovery, I was able to realize my child was-

n't really that tiny piece of ground I had adorned with bronze and flowers. I still go to the cemetery, but not as frequently, and upon occasion bring flowers. I learned silk flowers last longer during the season when they are permitted by the cemetery.

It is now going into the third year since my child died. I have found a more wonderful way to exercise my desire to bring flowers. Once a week now, I go to the florist and order my "usual bunch" and bring them home. They are now centerpieces to a dinner table or beautiful in a crystal vase in my living room. I have brought my tribute to my child home where I feel it belongs. This might not work for everyone yet, but it might be worth trying. You may find this remembrance in flowers more personal to your feelings. I wish someone would have suggested it to me along time ago.

Remember, don't be so caught up that you forget to smell the flowers. They are life, a promise of beauty and a hope for your recovery. After all, isn't that what flowers are for?

*-Edie Kaplan TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL*

Are you one of those people who have a need to go to the cemetery often? The non-bereaved frown on that, as a rule. Many people feel there is something morbid about those visits; that you're obsessing. Unless they know the pain of losing someone they love better than themselves, they can't understand that need. Some people need to visit every day; others go now and then, and still some never go back once the funeral is over.

There are no rules. If it makes people uncomfortable when you make your cemetery visits, go alone. Don't feel you need to get anybody's permission or approval. Call a friend who won't judge you by the number of miles you travel to and from.

It is important for you to know that how

often you go to the cemetery has absolutely nothing to do with the length and depth of your expression of grief. It is important to know that you have the right to do whatever comforts you. It may not seem right to your sister, your brother-in-law or your friends - but that's their problem. If you try to please everybody by the things you do and say, you'll find you are not taking care of your needs - and there are no more important ones right now. You won't always require visits this often, and when you no longer feel this urge to go so often, don't feel guilty. It just means you are getting better. Accept it as that and move forward with your life when you are able. For right now, do what makes you feel better.

*-Mary Cleckley TCF Atlanta, GA chapter*

*"Mourning is a process that takes you on the journey from where you were before loss to where you will be as you struggle to adapt to change in your new life." Dr. Glen W. Davidson*

## AUTUMN FEELINGS

During the next couple of months, we will see many changes taking place in the world around us. The amount of daylight is decreasing; nights are becoming chilly: we'll often need sweaters or jackets as we venture forth each day. However, the most dramatic change that we notice here in New England during September and October is that of the trees trading their green summer outfits for the brilliant reds, oranges, and golds of autumn.

Many of us who are bereaved parents find ourselves feeling tense and depressed when the earth awakens in the spring; we may also experience these feelings when the dramatic changes of autumn occur.

A wise lady once said to me, "Our bodies respond to the changing season." She was right. They do! And they respond to FEELING. It seems to me that all of the grief feelings that I have - emptiness, sadness, anger, loneliness, guilt, depression - are intensified as the world of nature around me changes.

Sometimes, however, we can draw strength from situations that seem, on the surface, to be negative. A few weeks after Linda's death, I heard from two friends within a few days of each other. One said, "You know, when I'm troubled, I get out and walk until I find something in nature that I've never seen before. I look at it and think about it, and I am renewed." The other friend, who has some physical

disabilities, wrote me a note in which she said, "Whenever I feel discouraged, I find something in nature to study, and I am renewed."

I think that hearing from these two friends within just a few days of each other had to be more than a coincidence. I feel that there was an important message there for me, and I've tried to act on it.

I can draw strength from an early morning walk, from frost patterns on our windows, from a raging blizzard, from birds at our feeder, from a rainbow, a ladybug or a whale - if I slow down, think about those things, observe their intricacy and beauty, I can attempt to let some of their energy into myself.

We have to slow down, try to realize what is happening to us and be receptive to the energy that is in the natural world for us. When I'm down because it's a sparkling clear, colorful autumn day, and Linda isn't here to experience it with me, I have to feel that pain, then let it go so that the natural beauty and energy around me can strengthen and renew me.

Let yourself experience autumn - with the emptiness and aching that you feel. Then try to let go of those feelings, just enough to let the wonder and beauty of the season into yourself - one day at a time.

*Evelyn Billings  
Springfield, Massachusetts, TCF*

### POINTS TO PONDER

How do we ever get a positive feeling back in our lives? How do we begin to see the good instead of the bad? How do we begin to look forward to tomorrow instead of hoping that it doesn't arrive?

THE ANSWER IS: We have to teach ourselves how to begin to be positive again... a little at a time. But how do we do that?

An easy way is to make a list each night before you go to bed. Start trying to find five positive things about your day. They can be small, silly things like: 1) My car started this morning; 2) I didn't have a flat tire; 3) The coffee pot worked; 4) I heard a bird sing; 5) I found 2 socks the same color. Try to add another item to the list each day. Soon, you will find that you notice things that can be added to the list. When you come up with 25 per day, you will find your outlook on life has changed, and your life is more positive.

*Pam Duke - Dallas 1 Chapter, Texas TCF*