

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July & August 2023

Newsletter

Volume 23 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.

*"I will mention my grief,
I will find others who are good
at listening and empathizing
without judgment,
and I will trust them
with my important talk."
-Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D*

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

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 11, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm

August 8, 2023 6:45 - 8:45 pm

Where: Sterling House Community Center
2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06614

DIRECTIONS:

Take 1-95 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. It will be 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 Sterling House's 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

Zoom Co-ordinator

Kristen Cable

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso

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

CONTACT NUMBER: 475-882-9695

Editor's Notes

Tidings of peace are sent to you as we enter the months of summer. Summer used to be the time when we planned vacations, attended family reunions, organized picnics, and created outdoor parties with joy and excitement. Whatever our interests may have been, this was the time for family togetherness. Since our family is no longer intact since the death of our child, those activities which we participated in so freely in the past can be very painful to even consider doing now.

If this is the first summer following the death of your child, you may not have the energy or the slightest inclination to participate in these usual activities. Remember that this is normal; you must be gentle with yourself. If you don't feel able to get out and get involved, don't be concerned; just do what you feel you are able to do physically and emotionally.

Many parents farther in the journey find that doing something physical helps release the tension associated with grief. Some have found a measure of healing and peace working in their yard or garden. Planting a flower garden in memory of their child is very helpful, as well. Others may feel obligated to attend family activities, and once there, they find that they were able to enjoy themselves, although most of us feel guilty if we enjoy ourselves too soon after our child has died.

As we well know, grief work takes an amazing amount of physical, emotional, and spiritual energy. When you are grieving, it is important to relax and take time to be good to yourself. There are some ways you can accomplish this. For example, try to get outside as often as possible, even if only into the backyard. The warmth of the sun, the breezes against your skin, the scent of grass and flowers, and the chirping of birds will fill your senses. If you are open to this, you may begin to feel better, more alive even for a little while. Also, you should try to visit places where there is water. Watching the sunlit diamonds sparkle on the water and hearing the waves lap against the shore can be soothing to the senses. As the waves recede, try to envision your grief receding; as the waves return, think of them as *bringing peace and comfort to you*. Moreover, exercise helps to work off anger, frustration, and depression. Search out local parks and nature trails if you are so inclined. A walk around the block may be a start. Be sure to observe safety rules and if you can,

invite a friend, family members, your other children, or another grieving person to join you.

Even though most meetings take a hiatus during the summer, support meetings continue throughout the year. The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter keeps regular schedules all summer. For the newly bereaved, you will gain helpful ideas on coping. For the longer bereaved who have not attended a meeting in awhile, come back to visit your support group and lend a comforting ear to the newly bereaved.

Summer is also vacation time. You may be having trouble with that very thought. But, if you and your family do decide to take a vacation, please be aware that for bereaved parents, vacations can bring conflicting thoughts. We are supposed to be having fun while relaxing and revitalizing ourselves. But, how can we do this when our child has died? Many grieving parents feel torn between the desire to bring some normalcy to their surviving children through the desire to enjoy life again and the need to keep the memory of their child alive by keeping their grief alive. Again, be gentle with yourself. Remember that bereaved families and grieving parents need a respite from the daily stresses of work and of life and grief. So just decide when and where the vacation will be, plan ahead, and go. Allow yourself to enjoy it! Often we feel guilty if we have a good time. Remember how much your child enjoyed trips and just believe that he or she would want you to do the same.

If you are apprehensive about forgetting your child while you are on vacation, don't fear. You can never forget just because you are away from home. What you might want to do is set aside a time each day to remember your child and to deal with your grief. Every place you go, you might want to bring something home in your beloved child's memory. For instance, if your child never went to the ocean and this is where you are spending your vacation, bring back a shell which can sit on a shelf and tell everyone that this is for that child.

Needless to say, there are no quick fixes, easy answers, or perfect solutions. We do the best we can. That's true during summer and for vacations; just as it is true for every day life.



Taking one step at a time,
Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Grieving, Healing, Growing...

"No one told me about vacations" is a statement frequently heard from bereaved parents. "We thought getting away might make life easier for us, but it only made it clear how tough things really were."

Family vacations have become an American ritual, laden with the symbolism of togetherness, fun, financial success, and the reward for working hard. We work for vacations and frequently spend months planning them. Vacations have come to represent a reaffirmation of family life: providing an opportunity to strengthen the family bond, creating a history of shared experiences, and sharing moments of closeness and intimacy. In addition, vacations are a time for healing the stress of everyday life, and for getting away from familiar environments and routines. Along with opportunities to see new places and have new experiences, vacations carry with them the notion of getting in touch with one another, re-establishing intimacy, sharing, and communication.

Where do bereaved families fit into this picture as they try to go on with their lives, to reestablish a sense of normalcy for their surviving children and a sense of hope for the future? Why do bereaved parents return home from a 1st or 2nd vacation feeling disappointed and let down? What about those families where the family structure has changed in such a fundamental way that parents face a vacation without any children along, perhaps for the first time? To understand what happens, perhaps we have to examine the needs of bereaved families within the context of the familiar family vacation.

Bereaved families, like other families, need a respite from the stress of every-day life and work. Unlike other families, however,

some bereaved families want to escape from the stress and pressure

of intense grief. They need relief from trying to adjust to a familiar environment that no longer includes their child as well as sense of normalcy for their surviving children. Thus, for bereaved parents, vacations take on an additional meaning and can be perceived as an opportunity to reach some vaguely defined grief-related goals.

For some bereaved parents, there is a belief that vacations may provide an opportunity for relief from grief and escape from a painful home environment. For others, vacations can be potentially fearful experiences. Some may experience ambivalent feelings about being together without the familiar and sometimes comforting barriers of home and work. After all, getting away together, without the protection of these barriers, tends to emphasize the absence of our child. Families are reminded in the most insignificant ways. For instance, one family recalls that while on vacation each meal in a restaurant began with the removal of an extra place setting, a constant reminder for them of the absence of their child. Furthermore, the absence of regular routines and obligations weakens our defenses against dealing with painful emotions. Sometimes, a relaxed atmosphere and free time allow more time than we want for painful thoughts and reflection.

Many newly bereaved parents recall the fearful anticipation of leaving home for the first time after the death of their child. Whether it is leaving memories of the child, creating new memories, or fearing another tragedy, leaving home seems to be a common dread. Also, some parents feel that simply making vacation plans causes anxiety while others suggest it has more to do with coming home and once

again facing the reality of life without their child. Many bereaved parents remember the experience of

visiting extended family for the first time after the death of their child. Not only are they faced with the discomfort of socializing with numerous relatives, but it often seems as if no one wants to talk about the child or what happened. As a result, these family reunion vacations may leave a residue of bitter feelings and needs left unmet.

Expectations of what vacations can and cannot do to facilitate the healing process also enter into the picture. Spouses may have unexpressed expectations about sharing their grief, resolving issues of guilt or blame, or sharing memories of the past. One spouse may see the vacation as an opportunity to share his grief while the other spouse may want to avoid any discussion at all.

Having said this, what are the options for bereaved parents? Should we not take vacations? Are there too many potential pitfalls that will result in further distress for us? The response to this question may appear obvious, but it is not that easy. Bereaved parents need to be aware of what vacations can and cannot accomplish. Each of us who has experienced the death of a child comes to realize that there are no simple answers or solutions to getting through the grief experience. We do, however, come to understand that there are things we can do to make life easier for ourselves, and we need to keep these in mind as we plan vacations, just as we do for other grief-related issues and concerns. In addition, we need to remember that there are no absolute shoulds or should nots to living with grief. There is no right or wrong way; we do the best we can under difficult circumstances.

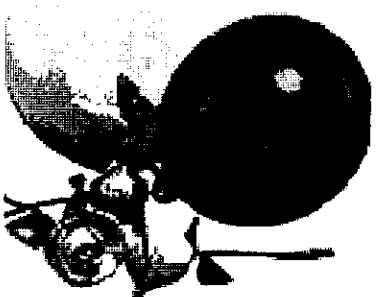
Whether you leave town or remain at home while on vacation, it is important that you take that time for yourself. Grief takes its toll; it is physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting. And, imperfect as they are, vacations do afford us an opportunity to become re-energized. Over analyzing a vacation can be hazardous. It is helpful to discuss how things are going, what helps, and what does not, but trying to figure out all the answers can be an overwhelming task itself. It is important to allow yourself to be distracted, to relax, and to do what you can to enjoy yourself. There are no quick fixes, easy answers, or perfect solutions. We do the best we can. That's true for vacations, just as it is true for everyday life.

Mindy Kaplan
MCHP (Oakbrook, Ill.)

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

We ask that you keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing such dates during July & August in your thoughts and in your hearts.

ANNA MARIA RINO	July 1	BARBARA YOUNG	August 2
KIM THIBODEAU CHIARALUCE	July 2	DAN O'SULLIVAN	August 3
ERIC S. HULTZBERG	July 4	ERIC ALLEN	August 3
CHRISTIAN LAWRENCE RUTTER	July 4	GEORGE ANDREW DiROCCO	August 3
MEGAN JANE ARSENAULT	July 4	PAUL WILLIAM MINAR	August 5
CHRISTIAN FERRIS RAKOCZY	July 4	BRIAN BELL	August 7
JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	July 6	ROBERT MANGANO	August 8
MICHAEL ESPACH	July 6	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 8
ERIN BABINEAU	July 12	THOMAS J. HENTHORN JR.	August 8
JEREMIAH SHANNON SALVATORE	July 12	JAMES MEDVEGY (Jamie)	August 9
ALEXA RAE HERON	July 13	STEVEN C. BELENCHIA	August 9
JODI DAVIDOWSKI	July 14	PETER BRADFORD KOVACS	August 9
ADAM GARDNER	July 14	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 9
CHARLES ROBERT MARTIN	July 15	WILLIAM KEVIN SMITH	August 10
GINA DECHELLO	July 16	DOUGLAS C. COLE, JR.	August 11
SOMMER LIEIGH BOKINA	July 17	MICHELE BROADLEY	August 12
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	AVA JANE HOWERTON	August 12
RICHARD ELIOT BONOSKY	July 18	JEREMY SAXE	August 13
DANIEL QUIRK	July 19	JOEY CLANCOLA	August 13
FRANK ARGONESE	July 19	KOREY JORDAN	August 13
MARCI BYITECK	July 21	GEOFFREY GARDNER	August 13
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	ANDREAS (AJ) JUSTESEN	August 15
Senior Airman LAWRENCE MANLAPIT III	July 21	BRANDON GIORDANO	August 17
SEAN EAREL	July 23	ANTHONY MICHAEL TEIXEIRA	August 17
MELISSA ERIKA MANCINI	July 23	DANIEL LAWRENCE TOOLE	August 18
BOBBY PROVENZANO	July 23	CARMINE J. MUNZ, JR.	August 18
SCOTT McCLENATHAN	July 26	VICTORIA "TORI" LYNN KOETSCH	August 21
MARK TORRESO	July 28	KATRELL BOHANNAN	August 22
LISA READ	July 30	KASANDRA SANDERS	August 22
		LORI ARGONESE	August 23
		AARON THOMAS HINE	August 25
		PETER RONALD RADZWILLAS	August 25
		DANNY STEIN	August 26
		JAMIE RITTER	August 27
		KEITH McCARTHY	August 27
		JOHN PATRICK FLANAGAN	August 27
		CHRISTOPHER PAPP	August 27
		BARBARA ANNE MINAR	August 27
		DIANA-ALEXANDRA BREAZ	August 28
		JASON WILLIAM CANNON	August 29
		TAMIKA CAMERON	August 29
		MICHAEL DAVID BUGLIONE	August 30



*Our wish is that
this day
of remembrance
will bring you
gentle peace.*

BIRTHDAYS

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

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

MARK TORRESO	July 1	JENNIFER D. GUSTAFSON	August 1
JOEL ALEXIS NIEVES	July 1	MARIA SKENDERIS ISOLA	August 1
MARISSA IRENE IRWIN	July 4	SARAH FOLEY	August 3
KATIE FONTNEAU	July 4	AMANDA LYNN DAIGLE	August 5
KEVIN SUTHERLAND	July 4	AARON HINE	August 6
WENDY JOAN CARPENTER	July 4	EDWARD GLOVER	August 6
FRED A. POPPA, JR.	July 5	MEGAN JANE ARSENAULT	August 6
BOSTON GRIMM STIBEL	July 7	GREGORY HARTZ	August 7
BETH LOGAN	July 8	ALEX PAUL FAKHOURY	August 7
SABINA ELIZABETH CECCARELLI	July 9	HERB GULLBERG IV	August 8
GEOFFREY GARDNER	July 9	JOSEPH DAVID LONGO	August 8
KEVIN MICHAEL KOCHAN	July 10	JAKE PANUS	August 9
TONY BROWN	July 11	NEIL GEORGE SWEETMAN	August 10
DJ ART	July 12	DENISE GLOVER	August 11
BRIAN STAPLETON	July 15	CLAIRE ANN DESTEFANO	August 11
JOSEPH MICHAEL KLINKO	July 15	DAVID ANTHONY GIERULA	August 12
SHAUN DOWD	July 15	JAVIER DANIEL COSME	August 14
BRIAN MICHAEL CANCELLIERI	July 15	JESSICA BURROWS	August 16
TEVIN GORDON	July 15	JEFFREY YALE	August 17
ERIC A. JONES	July 16	JOSHUA GALPIN	August 18
LAILA SYDNEY WALTERS	July 17	WILLIAM KEVIN SMITH	August 19
ANGELINA JOY PEARSON	July 18	BRIAN BELL	August 21
SOMMER LIEIGH BOKINA	July 19	CARLO MINASI	August 22
STEFANA MONHOLLEN	July 20	LINDA MEDINA	August 25
ROBERT MANGANO	July 20	JODI DAVIDOWSKI	August 26
JAMES (TOMMY) STUART	July 20	MARGARITA B. RAMOS	August 28
KYLE JEFFREY GEDNEY	July 21	PHILLIP DIVINCENZO JR.	August 28
SUSAN WOESSNER	July 22	JOLENE DECIUCIS	August 31
WILLIAM CLEARY	July 23	CHARLES BERSZAKIEWICZ	August 31
JON MALONE	July 29		
CHUCKIE ROTOLO	July 30		
BRIAN JAMES CHEPYA	July 30		

*"No matter how much time has passed,
I still feel your touch, see your light,
and will love you eternally."*

Angelversaries





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.

Please send your check to:

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. Please state what you would like written. All love gifts will be acknowledged as promptly as possible. The chapter leadership is grateful for your contributions of any amount.

Compassionate Verse

Confusion

*Two steps forward, one step back...
Or is it two steps backward, one step forward...?
Now I can't remember. Which way am I going?
and what will I do when I get there?*

Confusion, lack of direction, memory "loss", and a sense of just going in circles are all a part of the grieving process.

Over and over we find ourselves standing in the middle of a room wondering why we are there. We came with a purpose but darned if we can remember what it is now that we are here.

I know that it can be blamed on age, but I also know that grief can play havoc with our ability to function on a day-to-day basis. Tasks that once seemed simple now take forever to complete - and we only get it done if we write it down first! Thankfully, I can repeat that for me ... it's getting better. Now, it is age more than grief which steals my memory and hides it on the counter.

Yesterday, I thought I was pretty effective. I got dressed, I ate, I accomplished things. But today ... I can't find the list. I'm not sure I showered, and why am I looking in the freezer?

*Two steps backwards, today.
Oh well, tomorrow I will start again.*

-Jane Ono

TCF/Coquitlam, BC, Canada

July*August 2010 Winnipeg Chapter Newsletter

"Life is so fragile. It can shatter in so many pieces in the blink of an eye. Life, as we once knew it, will never be the same. As we pick up the pieces and try to mend a fragile piece of china, so we pick up the pieces of our lives and try to mend them together. From a distance we appear whole again, but up close, the cracks still show and the weaknesses are still there."

Nancy L. Lombardi
TCF, Nashville, TN

** THE SPACE**BETWEEN** THOUGHTS**

You are no longer in my thoughts constantly.
You are now dwelling in the space between thoughts.
A part of my every moment whether joyful or sad
or in between, or both simultaneously.
I walk, talk, work, play, and you surround me.
You are in the sparkle of my smile, the wisdom in my
thinking, the rainbow circles in my life.
As I breathe and live, you breathe and live.
As I learn, you are teaching, not only me, but all those
who are in my life today.
You are a blessing, dear child, for all you were and all
you are and all you'll forever be.

-Genesse Bourdeau Gentry June 2001
TCF Marin Chapter Leader
North Canada Regional Coordinator