



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

## Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

November/December 2024

**Newsletter**

Volume 24 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.

*“What do we live for, if not to make life less difficult for each other.”*

George Eliot

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

TCF Website: [www.tcf-bridgeport.org](http://www.tcf-bridgeport.org)

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

#### 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

**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 12, 2024 6:45 – 8:45 pm**

**December 10, 2024 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.

### 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

On line newsletter: Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Michele Peloso

Hospitality: Dee Tutka

Community Outreach and Librarian: Michele Peloso

# When Words Become Gifts

Written by Nita Aasen in memory of her sons, Erik and David Aasen, St. Peter, Minnesota  
Reprinted with permission from We Need Not Walk Alone, the national magazine of The Compassionate Friends



On Thanksgiving Day, 1994, two of my three young adult sons, Erik and David, were killed in a freak car accident. Years after the accident, my husband and I were at David's college alma mater for a holiday event. I was in the dessert line when a woman came up to me and said, "I saw your name tag-are you David Aasen's mom?" After doing a double take (it had been some time since I had been asked what used to be a rather common question), I replied with much appreciation. "Yes, I am!" With those three almost magical words, this person gave me five gifts.

Her first gift was to say David's name. Instead of just thinking to herself, Hmmm, I bet that's David Aasen's mom, but I better not say anything, she said something. Her second gift was sharing a story with me about how her daughter, a classmate of David's, still treasures the friendship she and David shared. Acknowledging that I'm still a mom was her all-important third gift. While my sons' deaths have resulted in my becoming a bereaved mother, death cannot take away the fact that I am and always will be Erik and David's mom.

The fourth gift was permission to share a bit of my grief journey with her. Since their deaths, I explained, there haven't been any truly easy carefree, feeling-on-top-of-the-world days, but taking each day as it comes has been the most "doable" way for me to go on. Her questions and manner did not make me feel obligated to cover up my grief and that was the fifth gift. I felt valued for my honesty and my integrity remained intact.

The warmth of those five gifts has lingered on in my heart and has comforted me. As I reflect on the experience, I marvel at how just a few simple words had such an impact. I have come to the conclusion that most bereaved parents want nothing more than the opportunity to talk comfortably with others about their children. Just being able to share stories about our sons and daughters in a safe place, along with the permission to mourn in our own way and for as long as we need to, even for a lifetime, is what matters to us. The real treasure comes when others introduce our children's names and stories into an everyday conversation. Knowing our sons and daughters are remembered and live on in the hearts and lives of others is a measure of the meaningful legacy that our children have left to us and to the world.



## 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

## Words to Comfort

### Words to Heal

#### Solace

*In the smallest hour of your day,  
when you are alone  
with things remembered, questions unanswered,  
and unfinished dreams,  
then...  
give to yourself the gifts of your kindness,  
bring to yourself the comfort of forgiveness,  
and share with yourself  
the mercy of your love.*

-Sascha Wagner

In honor of

Kevin Kochan

"Love you, Kevin"

*Mom & Dad*

*To: Joseph Peloso IV*

*Our love for you*

*is*

*Evermore!*

*Love, Mom & Dad*

In honor of

Bryce Costawong

"I miss hiking with you,  
Buddy."

-Dad

In memory of

**Carlo**

We love you with All of our being.  
You are always with us in our hearts  
and our souls. Love, *Mamma & Papa*

IN HONOR OF THE  
BRIDGEPORT CHAPTER'S

45<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF

HELP, HOPE, & HEALING  
MRS. IRENE KOSTZEWSKI

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

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



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

## **OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED...** **NOVEMBER ANGELVERSARIES**

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
Edward "Eddie" Casey	Nov. 19	Christian Laurence Rutter	Nov. 30
		Brianna Rose Sabol	Nov. 30

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

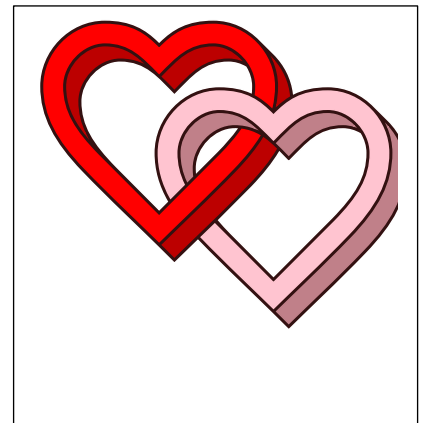
**" There is a place that we call  
Memory – a province by itself  
which, though unseen,  
is home and haven  
to the heart... and there,  
in peace and beauty, waiting,  
are those with whom we  
shared our yesterdays."**

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

## **DECEMBER ANGELVERSARIES**

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

<b>Christopher Hubinger</b>	<b>Dec. 2</b>		
<b>Ryan Joyce</b>	<b>Dec. 3</b>	<b>Rocco Bonavita</b>	<b>Dec. 19</b>
<b>Matthew John Evans</b>	<b>Dec. 3</b>	<b>Jovanni Natal</b>	<b>Dec. 21</b>
<b>Frank Thomas Frouge</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>William Potz</b>	<b>Dec. 23</b>
<b>Evon Edwards</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Brenna McMenamey</b>	<b>Dec. 23</b>
<b>William Gagliardi</b>	<b>Dec. 5</b>	<b>John Patrick Flanagan</b>	<b>Dec. 24</b>
<b>Aaron Matthew Hoffman</b>	<b>Dec. 7</b>	<b>Ethan Thornton</b>	<b>Dec. 24</b>
<b>Halle Root</b>	<b>Dec. 8</b>	<b>Joseph David Gagliardi Sr.</b>	<b>Dec. 24</b>
<b>Steven Spray</b>	<b>Dec. 8</b>	<b>Patrick J. Dubee</b>	<b>Dec. 26</b>
<b>Ava Jane Howerton</b>	<b>Dec. 8</b>	<b>Jennifer Leibowitz Antonier</b>	<b>Dec. 26</b>
<b>Mary Beth Esposito/Herr</b>	<b>Dec. 9</b>	<b>John E. Murphy Jr.</b>	<b>Dec. 28</b>
<b>Danielle R. Metatos</b>	<b>Dec. 10</b>	<b>James Blomberg</b>	<b>Dec. 31</b>
<b>Keith Ronald Berry</b>	<b>Dec. 13</b>		
<b>Robert Michael Frouge</b>	<b>Dec. 14</b>		
<b>David Tyler</b>	<b>Dec. 14</b>		
<b>Daniel Howie Martinez Jr</b>	<b>Dec. 15</b>		
<b>Evan McNamara Hughes</b>	<b>Dec. 16</b>		



## At the Holidays, We Hope...

By Cathy Seehuetter TCF St. Paul, MN

For those of you for whom this is your first holiday with the empty chair at the Thanksgiving table, we know that it is a particularly difficult day, and all of us who have been through that first major holiday understand your sadness and will keep you close in our hearts during this holiday season.

For those of you who have been through the first one and are still in what I feel are the early years of this grief journey, we know how exhausting it is to try to put on a mask to make others feel comfortable. Here is hoping that you will be able to feel however you may feel today, and that your family and friends will be understanding, compassionate, and allow you to have those emotions, whatever they may be.

For those of us further down the road of our grief journey, we know that no matter the years that have passed since our child, grandchild, sibling, or other precious one has been gone, that though the years may soften our grief, we still ache for their presence and miss them with all our being.

And, above all, I truly hope that family and friends will speak their names, and, thereby, give you the gift of allowing you to remember - with them - the one you miss so much. Though gone from the earth, they are loved and present in our life every day and will forever be.

*Grief breaks our hearts  
but also bonds us to other hurting souls  
who are swimming in the pain of loss, too.  
They are weathering the storms and the changes  
That we find ourselves going through.  
Grief brings people into our lives through a common thread of suffering  
that may be the only warmth  
we feel in an isolating season of mourning. -Liz Newman*



# A Holiday Letter

*Dear Society:*

*Please be kind to those with a broken heart this holiday season. Please understand that they are doing the best they can. Please remember that there is no timeframe for grief. Grief in one form or another will always be felt. Please know that for some this is the absolute most difficult time of the year: the depths of the pain bursting at the seams. Please be empathetic, caring, and nonjudgmental. Please think about how you would feel if your everything was no longer here. Please extend a hand, a hug, and some love. Please know that we may need you now more than ever before. Please know that you cannot heal our grief or our broken hearts. Nor do we want you to. Please respect our wishes and always offer us an invitation even if we do not want or are unable to attend. Please know that we are not jealous of your joy, but that seeing others happy can be a devastating reminder of the pronounced void that now exists. Please love us through our pain. And above all else*

*Please. #saytheirname*

*Anonymous, written in 2018*



## *Dealing with Bereavement and Grief during the Holiday Season*

First know that people grieve in different ways, and any advice offered is done so for general purposes. You may find some of these tips helpful and that others might not be for you. There is no set way that people are supposed to grieve. We all do it in our own time and in our own way.

Overall, we know that most bereaved people generally cope with their loss pretty well. There is certainly sadness, but most people are able to continue moving forward and slowly rebuild their lives. During the holidays, however, many people find themselves having strong emotional reactions just as they would to other important dates (e.g. loved ones birth date, date of their passing). These reactions are often called anniversary reactions.

The holidays come with an expectation of cheerfulness and joy that many people who are grieving the loss of a loved one can find difficult to live up to. Those who are grieving often feel uncomfortable about expressing their sadness out of a fear of "being a downer." Others are often full of well-intended advice as to how to lessen the pain. However, sometimes seemingly innocent remarks can be intensely painful for someone who is mourning. For example, a blessing around the Christmas dinner table giving thanks "for the whole family being together" can feel like a knife in the heart. The holiday season can bring with it sudden reminders of the loss through the endless parade of past rituals, traditions and memories.

Here are 10 suggestions of things to try if you're grieving the loss of a loved one through the holiday season:

### **Do Less**

- Grieving takes a lot out of us physically and emotionally, leaving us depleted of energy. Reduce the pressure on yourself to do it all. Consider cutting back on things like sending out cards, entertaining, baking, decorating, putting up a tree, buying presents, etc.
- Be direct. If you are not in the holiday spirit, be clear about this with others. Let others know what they can, and cannot, expect of you this year.

### **Change Your Traditions**

- Consider changing your normal holiday routine if the thought of a standard Christmas is too difficult to bear. Perhaps this year you might decide to go on a special trip or have dinner with friends rather than the traditional family get-together.

### **Create New Traditions**

- You may choose to honor your loved one by creating a new tradition that allows you to keep their memory present. This might be done by setting a special place for your loved one at the dinner table,

or spending part of the day reminiscing about them. Or perhaps hanging a stocking filled with memory keepsakes of them. Sometimes these honoring traditions give you and others permission to talk about your loved one and remember them at this time of year.

### **Ask For Help**

- Talk to someone if you feel you need to. Keeping your feelings all bottled up can exacerbate feelings of isolation. Share your feelings with someone you trust. You may also consider joining a grief group, or starting one of your own.

### **Leave When You Need To**

- Attending social gatherings can be a good way of coping with the loneliness and isolation of grief; however, there may be times that you feel the need to excuse yourself early...that's ok.

### **Dedicate a Gift**

- All the holiday shopping can remind us of gifts that we would have thought to buy for our loved one. Consider donating or dedicating a gift in your loved one's honor.

### **Do Something Meaningful**

- Give back. Volunteer. Do for others. Service is a very powerful healer and scientists have found that doing a kindness is an effective way to alleviate depressive symptoms.

### **Self-Care**

- Grief can wear our bodies down. This, along with holiday stress, can deplete our body's energy and can leave us prone to colds, flus, aches and pains. Take care of yourself by getting proper sleep, eating healthy foods and exercising.

### **Be Gentle With Yourself**

- Accept that feelings of anguish are normal and to be expected during the holiday season. Don't assume that if you're having a difficult time with your grief during the holidays that this is a sign you are not healing. Know that you are doing the best that you can and that bereavement takes time.

Prepared by Sheila Gothjelsen, R. Psych (AB),  
Leduc Beaumont Devon Primary Care Network,  
Grief & The Holidays for "Health in a Minute"

