



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

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter

May/June 2025

Newsletter

Volume 25 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.

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.

"Grieving is like having broken ribs.

On the outside you look fine,

But with every breath, it hurts."

Please contact us at 475-882-9695

Leave your name, number and message, and we will return your call. Please send all correspondence to the following address:

TCF c/o Leslie Minasi, 34 Cedar Hill, Easton, CT 06612

Email: contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Website: www.tcf-bridgeport.org

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

National Office Address:

The Compassionate Friends
48660 Pontiac Trail #930805
Wixom, MI 48393
630-990-0010 877-969-0010

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:

May 13, 2025 6:45 – 8:45 pm

June 10, 2025 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

Am I Still A Mom?

By Annette Mennen Baldwin

In Memory of My Son Todd Mennen

TCF Katy, Texas Feb 25, 2006



It has been more than three years since my only child Todd was killed in an automobile accident. The circumstances of the accident included my husband as the driver of the vehicle. Following the accident, my former daughter-in-law filed a wrongful death suit against my husband and me. She has also terminated our relationship with Todd's children and eliminated any possibility of normal grandparent time spent with our three granddaughters. In the past two years, we have seen our granddaughters for five hours and the time spent was meaningless. The message has been sent that we are no longer a part of Todd's children's lives.

My husband has held up remarkably well, as long as he isn't forced to replay the accident in his mind over and over again. I don't want the details and have never looked at the photos of the vehicle. To this day, I do not want to know the extent of my child's injuries or the amount of suffering he underwent. I wonder about his last moments, his last thoughts. *And then I wonder am I still a mother?*

I was a good mother to Todd; my life centered on raising him to persevere and be the kind, gentle, goal-oriented, loving man that he became. My relationship with him as an adult was so rewarding, so full of joy. I enjoyed listening to my adult child and exchanging ideas with him. I shared the important facets of his family life, the birth of his children, babysitting on a moment's notice or when no one else would so that he and his wife could take some time off for a vacation. Discovering who my grandchildren were and how they perceived the world was enlightening and fulfilling. Watching his children grow and become individuals was a great joy to me. Watching my son become a strong and gentle parent made my heart sing.

And so I wonder; am I still a mother? My son no longer lives. I defined myself as a mother for over thirty-five years. My finest accomplishment was raising my son to become the fine man that he was. Now the bond between mother and child is broken. Life's paradigm has shifted. Or has it?

Am I still someone's daughter and someone's granddaughter? Of course, I am; even though I have lost my parents and grandparents. *So I am still a mother.* I think of my son each day, and I remember the good and bad times, the tough decisions, the structure, the letting go, the building of ideals and sense of honor and duty to family. But most of all, I remember my child's love and my love for my child and incredible journey of raising my child.

So when people ask me if I have children, I say, "Yes, I have one son and four grandchildren."



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
c/o Leslie Minasi, treasurer
34 Cedar Hill Road, Easton, CT

Love Gifts

Bryce,

Miss you!

Love always, Mom & Dad
(The Costawongs are forever.)

In loving memory of
Stephen Medeiros

Happy Heavenly Birthday !

Missing you, Always and Forever

Mom xo

Jonathan Thomas Simko

6 years and our hearts still ache at your absence. We know you are always with us, and we are with you.

Love, Mom, Dad, and Justin

In loving memory of

DANIEL M. QUIRK

On your 20th Angelversary

Always in our hearts!

Love you

Kevin!

Mom and Dad missed you at Easter.

In loving memory of

**Justin and Stephen
Spray**

Joseph,

We love you! We miss you!

Love, Mom and Dad

Bridget, "It has been 6 years.

Why, oh Baby Girl, why?" Mommy

"Her absence is like the sky –
spread out everywhere." CS Lewis

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered....

May we keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing these birthdays during May and June in our thoughts and in our hearts.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Joseph Salomon	May 1	John "Zachary" Naber	May 19
Charles Pataky	May 1	James Carbone	May 20
Paul-John Heron	May 1	David John O'Hare	May 20
James Hrzic	May 2	Jessica Burrows	May 20
Karen Bruno	May 3	Denise Pietrowski	May 22
Amber Kingersky	May 3	Ronnie Hill	May 23
Brian Michael Cancellieri	May 4	Charles Anthony Curcio	May 23
Danny Murphy	May 5	Christopher M. Tokarski Jr.	May 24
Carl R. Wennerstrand Talbot	May 5	Sabina Elizabeth Ceccarelli	May 25
Jeffrey Brandon Alaska	May 5	Herb Gullberg IV	May 25
Jake Monroe Beddoe	May 5	Neil Heilweil	May 25
Shaun Dowd	May 6	Finley Rhia Maguire	May 25
William Mariano Vargas	May 7	William J. Savo	May 26
Nina Teresa Poeta	May 9	Curtis Bucci	May 26
Kenneth A. Bartek Jr. (KJ)	May 9	Brian Laneuville	May 27
Patrick J. Dubee	May 11	Jessie Ebstein	May 27
Jeremy Collins	May 12	Ryan Edward Simpson	May 27
William A. Baker IV	May 13	Jennifer D. Gustafson	May 28
Conor Robert Bowen	May 13	Bryce Leo Costawong	May 28
Chelsea Marie Cunha	May 13	Shawn Watson	May 29
Brian Tuzik	May 14	Joseph D. "Trey" Warren III	May 30
Jon Malone	May 16	Francis Apgar	May 30
Joel Alexis Nieves	May 17		
Jose A. Suarez	May 18		

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered....

June Birthdays

Ethan Thornton	June 2	Thomas John Lee	June 18
William Gagliardi	June 2	Annette Kemeza	June 20
Stephen Joseph Medeiros	June 4	Halle Root	June 20
Christopher Robert Etes	June 5	Holly Flannery	June 22
Jonathan Simko	June 5	Angelina Joy Pearson	June 22
John Sinto	June 6	Jordan Pierson	June 22
Cheryl Petretti	June 9	Christopher Michael McEttrick	June 23
Susan Wolssner	June 10	Allison Grace Edwards	June 24
Torin Gregory Bond	June 11	Jafar Karzoun	June 30
Jennifer Leibowitz Antonier	June 11	Joseph David Gagliardi Sr.	June 30
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		



OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED... MAY ANGELVERSARIES

May we keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing these angelversaries during May and June in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Jafar Karzoun	May 1	Jason Glatz	May 17
Michael Joseph Hurta	May 2	Robert Young	May 17
Kathleen Elleen Baye	May 3	David Sampson	May 17
Karen Bruno	May 4	Daniel Lawrence Toole	May 18
Steven Wall	May 5	Peter Bradford Kovacs	May 19
Eric David Johnson	May 6	Tate Arletta Scheer	May 19
Christopher R. Perez	May 6	Sarah Cynthia Koury	May 20
Jeremy Collins	May 7	Peter Butanowicz	May 22
Bryce Leo Costawong	May 7	John Brady Chapin	May 24
David E. Cilento	May 8	Justin Michael Spray	May 25
		Michael Ryan Durkin	May 26
Carl Anthony Johnston	May 9	David Michael Vogt	May 26
Jeremiah S. Salvatore	May 9	Joan P. Burby Tellone	May 27
Derick James Springer	May 10	Melissa Stupak Montuori	May 27
Bridget Grace Cable	May 10	Jake Monroe Beddoe	May 27
Edward J. Stamper IV	May 11	Jeffrey Brandon Alaska	May 27
William (Billy) A. Slossar	May 12	Kasandra Sanders	May 28
Finley Rhia Maguire	May 12	Daniel Quirk	May 28
Ryan Thomas Walsh	May 13	Marissa Nicole Sanders	May 29
Christopher Papp	May 14	Craig Arsenault	May 29
Edward Angelo Pipkin	May 15	Brian Laneuville	May 29
Tiarra Web	May 15	Ronald Allen Jr.	May 30
Mariyah M. Nakhoune	May 15	Crystal Lynn Hayden	May 30
Joseph "Trey" Warren III	May 16	Justin Margitay-Balogh	May 31
Sean Garrett Rice	May 16	Lawrence Morrelli	May 31
Torin Gregory Bond	May 16		

OUR CHILDREN LOVED, MISSED, AND REMEMBERED... JUNE ANGELVERSARIES

Alexander J. (AJ) Agullar	June 1	Sean Earel	June 23
Joseph Salomone	June 1	Paul Steven Keeler	June 23
Scott McClenathan	June 2	Darren Joseph Reidy	June 24
Peter Ronald Radzwillas	June 2	Danny Stein	June 25
Chris Leahy	June 4	Stephen F. Zuraw	June 25
Francis Apgar	June 6	Roger Nealley Jr.	June 26
Adele Adesuwa Iyamu	June 7	Brain Castrillon	June 28
Jonathan Simko	June 7	Joann Simko Fasenella	June 28
Jayden Chetlen	June 7	David John O'Hare	June 29
Barbara Young	June 8	Andrew J. Donnellan	June 29
Christian Ferris Rakoczy	June 9	Justin Smith	June 29
Howie Tassitano	June 10	Richard Eliot Bonosky	June 30
Jessie Ebstein	June 10	Stephen J. Medeiros	June 30
Neil Heilweil	June 11	Lori Argonese	June 30
Lawrence P. Man Lapit IV	June 16		
Steven C. Belenchia	June 17		
Asley Joy	June 17		
Christopher Rivera	June 17		
Joseph Anthony Peloso IV	June 18		
Alan Richard Hoffman Sr.	June 20		
Anna Maria Rino	June 22		
Gabriella Josie Maria Rina	June 22		





A Bear Hug for Father's Day

Written by Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of her son, Todd Mennen

And her father, James M. Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX

May 28, 2008

As Father's Day approaches, we are reminded of the significant contributions and unique love of fathers and stepfathers. Their defined role, after the death of their child, is to support wives and surviving children. But their pain is deep.

Men, by their nature and in response to our society's expectations, do not usually grieve as openly as women. They do not talk candidly about their loss. They generally do not reach out to others for comfort. They are, after all, the solid center of the family. Their wife's pain supersedes their pain because women are "fragile." Or so they are told.

Yet, as I look into the eyes of so many bereaved fathers, I see a deep, gripping pain. The tears left unshed, the words that are never spoken, the anger, guilt, and agony... all remain in the eyes of the bereaved father.

What can a father do? They can: speak with other bereaved fathers; read books written by bereaved fathers; talk openly with spouses, private counselors, and close friends who are not as structured in their "male" societal roles; and try to attend at least three meetings of The Compassionate Friends. Attending a support group meeting may be a foreign concept to many men, but as my own dad often said: "Step up to the plate and see what happens."

My dad James M. Mennen was a wise man. A child of the Depression, he became a football player, a WW II Marine from the "Greatest Generation" and showed that he was a fighter for justice, a provider for his family, and a protector for all whom he loved. – "a man's man."

He endured much in his 78 years, and I only saw him cry a few times. But when his friend lost a child, my tough dad was the first one to reach out with a bear hug that wouldn't let go until the tears began to flow. They both cried. They both knew that the agony of losing a child was far worse than the horrors of war. Together, they cried!

May your bear hugs be many and your memories become sweeter with each passing year. May your child live forever in your heart so that peace embraces you always. This is my wish for you on Father's Day.

Compassionate Verse

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 the 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

Love and Hope

On a cold winter day, the sun went out,
Grief walked in to stay.
I turned away from the unwanted guest
and bid him be on his way.
Grief was merciless; he brought his friends
Loneliness, Fear, and Despair.
They walk these room, unceasingly,
in the somber cloaks they wear.
Every so often now, Love pays a call.
She always has Hope by her side.
I welcome Love as well as Hope,
For I surely thought they had died.
Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way,
Bids him be still for a while.
Then Love walks with me
through memory's hall,
and for a time...I can smile.

*Kerry Marston, TCF Grand Junction, CO
Dedicated to his son, Michael*

Our Children

I like to think, they are encircling us
Sunlight in their hair
Starlight in their eyes
Holding hands in love;
The older ones nurturing the younger
Helping them grow.
I like to think
They are One
As we are One, a family of Love.

Gloria Grant, TCF Miami, FL

As Long As I Can

As long as I can, I will look at the world for the both of us.
As long as I can, I will laugh with the bird, I will sing with
flowers, I will play to the stars, for both of us.
As long as I can, I will remember how many things on
this earth were your joy. And I will live as well as you
would want me to live, as long as I can.

Sascha Wagner

