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Families Grieving Children Plan for Summer Compassionate Friends Conference in Nashville

Oak Brook, IL (May 14, 2008)—Every year in the United States thousands of families go through the traumatic and stressful death of a child. Deep seated pain is etched within them as they struggle to survive what many would believe unsurvivable.

Bereaved family members at all stages in their grief are making plans to journey to Nashville July 18-20 to be with up to 1400 fellow grieving parents, siblings, and grandparents at The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 31st National Conference in Nashville July 18-20.

“The loss of a child is a devastating experience,” says TCF Executive Director Patricia Loder who is a twice bereaved parent and a bereaved sibling. “Our upcoming conference is designed to provide a way for bereaved family members to connect with others who are walking a similar path. This will be a nurturing atmosphere of acceptance, validation, understanding, and hope.”

Keynote speakers include Dr. Frank R. Lewis, surviving sibling and author; Bruce Murakami, whose remarkable story about how he has bonded and teamed with the drag racing teen who ended the life of his wife and daughter was made into the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie *Crossroads: A Story of Forgiveness*; Darrell Scott, whose daughter was the first to die at Columbine, was inspired to start “Rachel’s Challenge” in her memory, a program so far presented at more than a thousand high schools designed to inspire kindness and compassion; and Ann Hood bereaved parent and award winning author.

As well as a number of other activities, including a complete sibling program, there will be more than 100 bereavement workshops covering an extensive variety of topics related to the death of a child and the difficult journey that follows.

The conference will incorporate the ninth annual “Walk to Remember,” Sunday, July 20 at 8 a.m. up to 1300 persons attending the conference and from the surrounding area, are expected for the event, carrying the names of more than 10,000 children whose memories are being honored. Anyone who wishes to have a child remembered during the Walk may submit the child’s name online at www.tcfwalktoremember.org and volunteers will carry those names during the event, which is also a fundraiser, supporting the organization’s many national outreach programs.

In conjunction with the conference, a Professional Outreach Day seminar will be held Thursday, July 17 for nurses, physicians, social workers, counselors, emergency personnel, funeral directors, law enforcement officers, clergy, educators, and all who care for individuals or are interested in providing support for bereaved families after the death of a child. Continuing Education Units will be available for many professions. The public is invited to register. Registration for Professional Outreach Day includes admission to the full three day conference.

For more information or to register for the conference, the Walk to Remember, or Professional Outreach Day, visit The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org or call the National Office toll-free at 877-969-0010.

The Compassionate Friends is the world’s largest self-help bereavement support organization, with more than 600 chapters in the United States including all 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. TCF has a national presence in more than 30 countries around the world.

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