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As Memorial Day Nears, Bereaved Families Plan for Summer Conference in Hollywood

With Memorial Day approaching, bereaved family members from across the country who have experienced the death of a child are making summer plans to remember them by attending The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 2004 National Conference in Hollywood July 30-August 1.

“The loss of a child is a devastating experience that touches thousands of families every year,” said TCF Executive Director Patricia Loder. “With Memorial Day upon us, it is hard to find a loss that causes more sorrow in our nation than the death of a child, no matter the age or the cause, from war, to sickness, to accidents.”

The Compassionate Friends is the world’s largest self-help bereavement support organization, with nearly 600 chapters covering all 50 United States, including 36 in the conference host state of California. TCF also has a national presence in an estimated 29 countries around the world.

According to Mrs. Loder, the 27th National Conference of The Compassionate Friends is designed to make the journey faced by bereaved families just a little easier. Bereaved family members will connect with others who are walking a similar path in a nurturing atmosphere of acceptance, validation, and understanding, she explained.

Featuring several well-known keynote speakers and more than 100 workshops, the conference will be held at the new Renaissance Hollywood Hotel located near famous Hollywood landmarks including The Hollywood Walk of Fame, The Kodak Theatre—home of the Academy Awards—and Grauman’s Chinese Theatre.

Featured keynote speakers include: Richard Riordan, former mayor of Los Angeles; Jeannine Lorae Martineau, member of the California State Board of Education; Ceil Buonocore whose son was killed by terrorists at the Rome Airport in 1985; and Antoinette Bosco, author of “The Pummeled Heart—Finding Peace Through Pain.” All are bereaved parents.

An annual highlight of the conference will be the fifth “Walk to Remember,” Sunday, August 1 at 8 a.m. when more than a thousand conference attendees, relatives, and friends are expected to walk up to two miles carrying the names of as many as 10,000 children who have died, but are not forgotten.

In conjunction with the conference, a one-day professional seminar will be held Thursday, July 29 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. Keynote speaker is Katie Sullivan of the New York City Medical Examiner’s Office who works extensively with bereaved families in the aftermath of 9/11. Continuing Education Units will be available for many professions.

For more information, including a complete list of workshops plus downloadable registration brochures for the conference and the Professionals Day, visit The Compassionate Friends national Web site at www.compassionatefriends.org or call the national office toll-free at 877-969-0010.

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