



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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For Immediate Release

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Grieving Families Prepare to Visit Portland For Compassionate Friends National Conference

Portland, OR (July 15, 2009) The nation's largest bereavement conference will be held in Portland, Oregon by The Compassionate Friends August 7-9 when as many as 1200 parents, siblings, and grandparents from across the country, grieving the death of a child, will converge on the city. This will be The Compassionate Friends 32nd National Conference, which includes its tenth Walk to Remember.

All those attending will have one thing in common, their family has been torn apart by the death of a child, whether it happened two weeks ago or 40 years.

"This is a unique conference because everyone has experienced what most consider the ultimate loss, the death of a child within the family," says Patricia Loder, executive director of the 615 chapter national nonprofit organization. "We gather together in a nurturing atmosphere of acceptance, validation, understanding, and hope."

Keynote speakers include: Candy Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD); Reg and Maggie Green whose donation of organs from their son Nicholas after he was killed by highway bandits in Italy created a movement that has saved thousands of lives; Darcie Sims, internationally known grief speaker; and Michelle Longo Eder, accomplished local attorney and author of *Salt in Our Blood—the Memoirs of a Fisherman's Wife* that talks about the death of her son after the fishing boat he's in capsizes.

Nearly 100 workshops on various facets of grief will be held, as well as sharing sessions, memory boards, hospitality suites, and much more. The weekend includes a special professional performance of the Pulitzer Prize winning play *Rabbit Hole* about a couple's struggle with grief after the sudden death of their four-year-old son.

An estimated 10,000 children who have died from across the country will have their names carried by the more than 1,000 participants in the Walk to Remember. The Walk will start at 8 a.m. Sunday at the Portland Doubletree Lloyd Center where the conference is being held.

"As many as a third will be attending a TCF national conference for the first time," says Mrs. Loder, who herself is a twice bereaved parent. "We are doing everything possible to make them feel comfortable. Anyone who would like to attend, but has not yet registered, may do so at the conference."

For more information, please call 877-969-0010 or visit www.compassionatefriends.org. The Compassionate Friends is the world's largest self-help bereavement organization for families that have had a child die. The organization has a presence in at least 30 countries worldwide.

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