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For Immediate Release

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Worldwide Candle Lighting December 10 Remembers All Children Who Have Died

Oak Brook, IL, December 1, 2006—Tears of remembrance will flow December 10 when tens of thousands of families around the globe, united in the loss of a child, will join together as they light candles to honor the memories of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

This is the tenth anniversary of the Worldwide Candle Lighting, sponsored annually by The Compassionate Friends, the nation's largest self-help bereavement organization. The event has grown from a small Internet observance to one that encompasses the globe and is celebrated in more than a dozen countries.

Held annually the second Sunday in December at 7 p.m. local time, the Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the world who light candles for one hour to honor and remember children missing from their lives, but not from their hearts. Observances are held throughout the day.

"The holidays are very hard for most bereaved families," says Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends. "The Worldwide Candle Lighting is one way that we try to bring light out of darkness during this difficult time. Like a ring, this circle of light surrounding the globe represents that there is no beginning and no end for the love we carry for our children. It will exist forever."

The number of formal Worldwide Candle Lighting events has increased substantially over the past few years and is expected, for 2006, to top 400 in the United States alone. Last year, there were 342 U.S. services submitted and placed on The Compassionate Friends USA national website, representing all 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. Services are planned not only by chapters of The Compassionate Friends, but also by allied organizations, churches, hospitals, funeral homes, and caring individuals. In addition, thousands of informal candle lightings are being held in homes with friends and family in areas where no formal candle lighting is planned, or persons are unable to attend. Known services open to the public, including those in other countries, are listed on The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org.

Thousands are also expected to visit an online remembrance book at the TCF national website December 10 to leave a message in memory of a special child who has died.

The Compassionate Friends has nearly 600 TCF chapters in the United States with locations in all 50 states, as well as Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. The organization has a presence in an estimated 29 countries around the world. For more information, visit The Compassionate Friends national website or call, toll-free 877-969-0010.

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David Ramos Ocasio of Cidra, Puerto Rico, daughter Bianca (left), and niece Aeris Rivera remember David's brother Alex, who was robbed and murdered while at work in the family business in 2004. They were among 500 who gathered in Parque Central in San Juan during last year's Worldwide Candle Lighting service. Photo courtesy of Tristan Reyes.