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For Immediate Release

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Families Living with Loss of Child Unite for Oklahoma City Conference and Walk to Remember

Oklahoma City, OK, (July 11, 2007)—An estimated 1400 persons mourning the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild will converge on Oklahoma City shortly for The Compassionate Friends 30th National Conference July 20-22 and the eighth annual Walk to Remember.

“When a child dies, it’s like the clock stops,” says Patricia Loder, Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends. “With friendship, understanding, and compassion our national conferences provide the bereaved hope for the future that life will go on and one day again be good.” The Compassionate Friends, with its main office in Oak Brook, Illinois, is the country’s largest self-help bereavement organization with nearly 600 chapters across the United States, including every state, Washington D. C. and Puerto Rico.

The conference features keynote speakers Elizabeth Edwards, bereaved parent, author of the current best seller *Saving Graces: Finding Solace and Strength from Friends and Strangers*, and wife of presidential candidate John Edwards; sports figure and author Bill Hancock, whose son died in the 2000 crash of the plane that killed members and staff of the Oklahoma State University basketball team; Bud Welch, whose daughter died in the bombing of the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building; and Simon Stephens, beloved founder of The Compassionate Friends now in an estimated 30 countries worldwide.

More than 100 bereavement workshops will be offered, covering an extensive variety of topics related to the death of a child and the journey that follows for the family. Many other activities are planned, including a complete sibling program and the Eighth Annual Walk to Remember Sunday at 8 a.m.

“We are particularly excited this year about our keynote speakers who come from all walks of life, but have experienced tremendous pain from the loss of their children or siblings,” says Mrs. Loder. “Elizabeth Edwards, whose son Wade died in 1996, is well-known for her bravery in her personal struggle with cancer, but most people may not realize the compassion she continuously extends to others who have also experienced the death of a child.”

Bill Hancock, author of *Riding with the Blue Moth* which chronicles his ride across the United States on a bicycle after the death of his son, Will, has been well-known to sports fans as director of the NCAA Final Four Basketball and currently as administrator of the NCAA Bowl Championship Series. Bud Welch, who met with Tim McVeigh’s father after the Murrah Building attack that killed his daughter, Julie, fought unsuccessfully to save Tim’s life. The Reverend Canon Dr. Simon Stephens, now stationed in Russia five minutes from Red Square, will draw an international crowd as TCF’s founder who helped spawn Compassionate Friends organizations around the globe.

The conference will be rounded out by the two-mile Walk to Remember Sunday, July 22 at 8 a.m. Last year the names of nearly 10,000 children being honored and remembered were carried during the walk. While early registration for the conference and the Walk to Remember, as well as a pre-conference Professional Outreach Day, has closed, several hundred are expected to register at the door starting July 19, and the day of the Walk starting at 7 a.m. The conference is at the Cox Convention Center, where the Walk to Remember is also expected to start.

“Right now there are people who don’t even know they are eligible for our organization who will probably show up at the door to register,” notes Mrs. Loder. “We will open our arms and our hearts to them.”

Those who wish to learn more about the conference, or locate one of TCF’s nearly 600 local chapters, may visit www.compassionatefriends.org or call The Compassionate Friends National Office toll-free at 877-969-0010.

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