



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

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For Immediate Release

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Hundreds of Services Planned

Bereaved Families Unite for Worldwide Candle Lighting

Oak Brook IL—(December 2, 2009) Tens of thousands of families around the world, grieving the loss of a child, will join together Sunday, December 13 for The Compassionate Friends thirteenth annual Worldwide Candle Lighting.

“The holiday season is especially difficult for bereaved families,” says Compassionate Friends executive director Patricia Loder. “The second Sunday in December has become the one day during the holiday season when families can unite in remembrance of all children gone too soon.

“So often our loss is minimized by others who believe the holiday season is a time to forget the realities of life,” says Mrs. Loder. “When your child has died, it’s hard to be in a festive mood.”

More than 500 services open to the public will be held in the United States including all 50 states, plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico. Last year The Compassionate Friends received information on services held in approximately 20 countries outside the United States.

The Worldwide Candle Lighting is sponsored by The Compassionate Friends, the world’s largest self-help bereavement organization for families grieving the death of a child. The organization has more than 625 chapters blanketing the United States. The Worldwide Candle Lighting was started by a small group of Internet visionaries who recognized that a day should exist to honor the memories of all children who have died. The observance has grown every year and is now believed to be the world’s largest mass candle lighting. The candle lighting is officially held for an hour at 7 p.m. local time around the world, creating a virtual wave of light. Tens of thousands, unable to attend services held throughout the day, will light candles for that hour wherever they may be, whether alone or with friends and family.

Persons interested in participating in the Worldwide Candle Lighting, but who may not be able to attend an organized event have two additional alternatives. They can join in the Online Support Community (chats) on The Compassionate Friends national website. They also can join in a virtual candle lighting being held at 7 p.m. PST in Second Life, an online virtual community with more than 6 million members.

As in the past, chapters of many allied organizations are expected to participate in this year’s event including MADD, MISS, SHARE, Parents of Murdered Children, and BPUSA. U.S. services are also being sponsored by local bereavement groups, churches, hospices, hospitals, funeral homes, schools, and many individuals.

In addition, bereaved family members, relatives, and friends are invited to post a memorial message December 13 in a Remembrance Book on TCF’s national website. Last year several thousand messages, some in foreign languages, were received during the Worldwide Candle Lighting day from throughout the United States and dozens of countries abroad.

For more information including the location of services both in the U.S. and around the world, visit www.compassionatefriends.org or call 877-969-0010.

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