



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

National Office
900 Jorie Blvd.
Oak Brook, IL 60523

For Immediate Release

FROM: Wayne Loder
Public Awareness Coordinator
The Compassionate Friends
(Toll free) 866-964-4000
E-mail: wayne@compassionatefriends.org

Grieving Families Prepare to Visit Minneapolis For Compassionate Friends National Conference

Minneapolis, MN (June 30, 2011)—The nation's largest self-help bereavement conference will be held in Minneapolis, MN by The Compassionate Friends July 15-17 when more than 1300 parents, siblings, and grandparents from across the country, grieving the death of a child, are expected to converge on the city. This will be The Compassionate Friends 34th National Conference, which incorporates its 12th 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 or 40 years ago.

"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 625 chapter national nonprofit organization. "We gather together in a nurturing atmosphere of acceptance, validation, understanding, and hope."

Keynote speakers include: David Morrell, bereaved parent and grandparent, author of the poignant *Fireflies* but perhaps best known for creating Rambo (adapted to the big screen with Sylvester Stallone); Carol Kearns, bereaved parent, author of *Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare* and an expert on the psychological impact of noted headline crimes; Mary Rondeau Westra, author of *After the Murder of My Son*, written after the senseless murder of her son; and Mitch Carmody, bereaved parent and twice bereaved sibling, author of *Letters to My Son*.

Nearly 100 workshops on various facets of grief will be available, as well as sharing sessions, memory boards, hospitality suites, a full bookstore, and much more. The weekend includes a special professional performance of the "Best of How to Talk Minnesotan The Musical," a shortened version of the state's longest running and most successful homegrown musical comedy.

As many as 15,000 children who have died from across the country will have their names carried by the up to 1400 participating in the Walk to Remember. The Walk will start at 8 a.m. Sunday at the conference host hotel, the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel Minneapolis South (which has been sold and will become the Doubletree Bloomington-Minneapolis South with signage and official name changes scheduled for the week of the conference). Registration for the Walk starts at 7 a.m..Sunday.

"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.

###