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New Chat Room Allows Relatives of Iraq/Afghanistan War Dead to Share Pain of Grief over Internet

November 8, 2004—For what may be the first time, an Internet chat room is being started by a bereavement organization so that parents, adult siblings, and grandparents who have experienced the death of a child in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan can share their feelings of loss and grief.

The Compassionate Friends, a self-help bereavement organization with nearly 600 chapters in the United States, will have a chat room open to relatives of those who have died in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan starting Saturday, November 13. Open from 9-10 p.m. EST Saturdays, the chat is closed to the general public.

“While many parents who have had a child die during the war have found help through our many local chapters, this chat room opens the door for them to talk with each other about a singular type of pain that is unique to those who have lost a child during wartime,” says Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends. “By bringing together the parents, siblings, and grandparents of soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country, we believe this chat offers these relatives an opportunity to experience understanding, friendship, and hope no matter where they may be living.”

One of the chat moderators will be Dawn Golby of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Her 26-year-old son, Christopher, of Fountain, Colorado became the 500th military fatality of the war when the medevac helicopter of which he was crew chief was shot down January 8, 2004 near Fallujah. All four crew members and the five wounded soldiers being transported to a hospital facility were killed.

“I have searched and searched for a chat like this for months,” said Mrs. Golby. “General chat rooms are great for helping to get through the loss of a child, but I know how hard it is for someone to relate to the horrific way a war kills and tears a person apart, knowing there is absolutely nothing you could have done to help your child or loved one.”

The chat room can be accessed through The Compassionate Friends National website at www.compassionatefriends.org. In addition to the chat for relatives of the war dead, The Compassionate Friends also offers chats on many areas of bereavement following the death of a child. A listing of subjects and times is available on the website.

The Compassionate Friends, with a presence in an estimated 29 countries, is the world’s largest self-help bereavement organization, assisting families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age from any cause. It also provides information to help others be supportive. Chapters are located in all 50 states plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. To contact The Compassionate Friends regarding the Iraq/Afghanistan chat, or to learn locations of local chapters, visit the TCF National website at www.compassionatefriends.org or call toll-free 877-969-0010.

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