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## **For Immediate Release**

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# **Twelve Hundred Bereaved Parents, Family Members To Converge on Hollywood for Grief Conference**

The stories will all be similar, yet each one different, as some 1200 persons mourning the death of a child meet in Hollywood July 30-August 1 for the 27th national conference of The Compassionate Friends, the world's largest self-help bereavement organization.

Some children remembered will have died from a long term illness, others suddenly. There will be many causes of death, ranging from car accidents, to suicide or AIDS, and beyond. Children will be remembered who died before birth to those who died at age 50 or later in life. Some children will have died a couple months before while others died 30 years ago.

Such is the makeup of a national conference of The Compassionate Friends where strangers quickly become friends and picture buttons of a child stimulate a short conversation into an impromptu sharing session.

But what many of those attending will come for are the speakers and workshops that promise to impart a sense of survival to those family members left behind. Featured keynote speaker will be Ceil Buonocore, retired health care professional whose son was killed by terrorists at the Rome Airport in 1985. She will be joined by keynoters: Richard Riordan, California's Secretary for Education; Jeannine Lorae Martineau, member of the California State Board of Education; and Antoinette Bosco, author of "The Pummeled Heart—Finding Peace Through Pain." All are bereaved parents.

"This is a unique conference because everyone has experienced what most consider the ultimate loss, the death of a child within the family," said Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends. "We gather together in an atmosphere of healing and hope for the future."

The conference, held at the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel on the Walk of Fame, has as its theme, "Hollywood, Where Our Children Are the Stars." It includes the fifth annual two-mile "Walk to Remember" Sunday at 8 a.m. with 1,000 expected to participate and a pre-conference Professional Bereavement Seminar Thursday for nurses, physicians, social workers, counselors, emergency personnel, funeral directors, police officers, clergy, and other professionals. CEUs are available.

At the national conference, there will be 100 workshops covering nearly every topic related to the death of a child. For information on the conference, "Walk to Remember," or Professional Seminar, call the TCF National Office toll-free at 877-969-0010 or visit The Compassionate Friends national Website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). Those attending do not need to belong to a chapter. The Compassionate Friends has nearly 600 chapters in the United States and a national presence in an estimated 29 countries around the globe.

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