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## For Immediate Release

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# *Conference and 'Walk to Remember' to Unite Families Living with Loss of a Child*

Dearborn, MI, May 23, 2006—Memorial Day is an appropriate time to remember those children who are mourned, but never forgotten, says Patricia Loder, Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends. “Whether the child who died was an adult, teen, youngster, or died at or before birth, millions of families in the United States carry the pain that comes with the death of future dreams.”

Besides Memorial Day, another opportunity to allow families to remember their children is the upcoming Compassionate Friends (TCF) 29th National Conference in Dearborn, Michigan July 14-16. With up to 1500 expected, registration is now in progress for the conference. The Compassionate Friends, with main offices in Oak Brook, Illinois, is the country’s largest self-help bereavement organization with nearly 600 chapters across the United States, including 19 in Michigan.

Chet Szuber, who made national news when he received the transplant of his daughter’s heart, even as he grieved her death, will be a featured speaker at the conference. Other speakers include Marilyn Heavilin, three time bereaved parent and author of the bereavement best-seller “Roses in December”; William Ritter, bereaved parent, retired minister, and author of the book “Take the Dimness of My Soul Away: Healing After a Loved One’s Suicide”; and Patricia Loder, TCF’s executive director. The conference will feature nearly 115 workshops on various grief topics for parents, siblings, and grandparents.

A pre-conference Professionals Day will be held Thursday, June 30 for professionals who care for individuals at the scene, at the hospital, or during the funeral process and provide support for bereaved families after the death of a child. CEUs will be available for LCSWs, MFTs, counselors, and nurses. All others will receive certificates of completion.

Eric Hipple, the very popular former quarterback of the Detroit Lions, will be honorary Grand Marshal of The Compassionate Friends seventh annual ‘Walk to Remember’ Sunday, July 16 at 8 a.m. Hipple, whose son, Jeff, died by suicide in 2000, will lead the two-mile walk.

“This is one of the ways in which I’m trying to help others like myself who have had a child die,” says Hipple. “The Compassionate Friends is an inspiring organization dedicated to helping those across the United States who have been devastated by the death of a child within their families.”

“This walk is very symbolic because, while our children cannot physically be with us, their memories will always be carried within our hearts,” adds Loder, who is a twice bereaved parent and a bereaved sibling.

Drawing from Michigan and surrounding states, as well as those present for the conference, more than 1,000 people are expected for the walk.

“This is our seventh ‘Walk to Remember’ and we are constantly amazed at how many people participate in some way,” observes Loder. “Even those who are not able to come to Dearborn send us the names of their children and volunteers carry them during the Walk.”

Last year the names of nearly 10,000 children who had died were carried during the walk. Those who wish to have a child’s name carried during the walk may do so by visiting The Compassionate Friends Walk to Remember website at [www.tcfwalktoremember.org](http://www.tcfwalktoremember.org).

Those who wish to learn more about the conference, or locate one of TCF’s nearly 600 local chapters, may visit [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) or call The Compassionate Friends National Office toll-free at 877-969-0010. The Compassionate Friends/USA has chapters in every state, plus Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. Worldwide, TCF has a national presence in an estimated 29 countries.

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