

# Bear Buddies Offer Comfort to Grieving Buncombe County Children, Teens

ASHEVILLE, N.C., May 29, 2013 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – If helping a grieving child makes one’s heart sing, then tune into this opportunity to help children and teens. Join the Heart Songs program of Four Seasons Compassion for Life as its Asheville Checkpoint kicks off its first Bear Buddy drive to benefit Buncombe families June 1-30.

“Every child who comes through our program gets to choose a teddy bear,” says Susan Bumgarner, a child and teen bereavement counselor and coordinator of Heart Songs. “Every child needs something to hold when someone in their lives faces end of life.”

The Bear Buddy program anticipates an increase of requests for support for grieving Buncombe County children and families, and Bumgarner wants to be ready. Heart Songs volunteers hope to gather 100 bears. Though this will be the first year the program extends into Buncombe County, last year 200 children in Henderson County received bears.

“Children feel loss deeply,” says Bumgarner, “but may not have the words to express it.”

Teddy bears offer comfort at a time of deeply heart-felt crisis. Law enforcement and fire departments have long utilized bears as a means to give children something to hold during times of crisis. The Bear Buddies program extends this use to children who expect the loss of a loved one, or who have experienced that loss.

“Too often, children are the forgotten mourners,” Bumgarner says.

Additionally, Teddy Bears may communicate important American ideals about compassionate leadership. Believed to be named for the 26th United States president Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, the Teddy Bear commemorates a legend of the youngest president who demanded members of his hunting party release a bear captured and tied for sport.

Donations of new bears are welcome. To donate a new Bear Buddy for a child, Asheville-Buncombe County residents may visit the following locations from June 1-30:

Four Seasons-Checkpoint, 373 Biltmore Avenue; Appalachian Vintner; Diamond Brand; Mast General Store; Fresh Market; Audubon Apartments; OP Taylor, Biltmore Park; Ingles, Skyland and Fairview; Fire House Subs, Long Shoals Road; and Weirbridge Village Apartments.

For information on volunteering with Heart Songs or to donate a bear, visit an area drop off location or contact Susan Bumgarner at [sbumgarner@fourseasonscfl.org](mailto:sbumgarner@fourseasonscfl.org). Learn more about Four Seasons Compassion for Life hospice or palliative care in western North Carolina, or bereavement

services for Buncombe County children, teens and families at  
<http://www.fourseasonsfl.org/>

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