

# Families of Highway Fatalities



"Have a heart for highway safety"

**FHF**

## Upcoming Events:

February: 2nd Annual Chili ~ Craft Peer Support Function

March: Speaker's Bureau Training class

April: 2009 Annual Fatality Memorial Service

See Pg. 6 for details

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## "Coping with the Holidays" Hope and Healing Seminar



The "Coping with the Holidays" Hope and Healing Seminar was held November 14th in Columbia. This annual seminar was created to address the particular bereavement issues that accompany the holiday season. This workshop offers suggestions for healthy ways to cope. In addition to addressing the holiday issues, several other important topics such as birthdays, date of death anniversaries and milestones were covered as well. Each of these topics were expressed by family members as regular hurdles in the journey.

The seminar was facilitated and graciously offered as a community service project by Geoffrey Williams, a Licensed Professional Counselor and Counselor Supervisor with a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling. He is currently the manager of the Day Treatment Program at The Counseling Center at Palmetto Health Baptist in Columbia. He was assisted by Amy L. Dixon who is a nationally Board-Certified Music Therapist and Licensed Professional Counseling-Intern. She works in The Counseling Center and Adjunctive Therapy departments at Palmetto Health Baptist. She facilitates counseling, music therapy and creative arts groups.

Special thanks to Ulla Dahlen, a Licensed Professional Counselor Intern, who assisted at the seminar; teaching that the acceptance and expression of feelings is often crucial to the healing process, and to Katie Duke, Counseling Intern, for providing useful exercises on how to be expressive with our emotions in a supportive and healthy manner.

Cheryl Jones stated at the conclusion of the Hope and Healing Seminar that "the best way to stay on the healing path is to recognize the small things in life; like the sound of music and the beauty of nature and FHF provides us the tools to teach us this".



**Left:** Gert Thompson and Treasa Crosland pose with a few of the Hobby Horses made by our members after the Hope and Healing Seminar. These horses were crafted with love and are being distributed to children at the Palmetto Health Richland Hospital. This community project was the idea of FHF member Debra Harding, who believes in performing random acts of kindness in honor of her son Mike Harding.



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## FHF Volunteers honored at Annual Luncheon

FHF volunteers were honored at the second annual luncheon in Columbia, where troopers and command staff sponsored a family member and expressed their genuine gratitude for the many hours devoted to speaking, assisting and supporting the Highway Patrol at the many venues offered to educate the public about highway safety.

These volunteers have dedicated their time to sharing their personal stories, handing out safety literature and assisting in the different campaigns by sharing the loss of their loved ones to help change the driving behaviors of others behind the wheel. This has provided an avenue for them to work through their grief while providing a compelling and lifesaving message to the public.



Facing: Deidre Johnson , FHF member, sits at the head of the table next to Katie Duke and Amy Dixon, volunteers from Palmetto Health Baptist, and enjoys conversation during the annual volunteer luncheon.

Volunteers can help in many ways. SCHP provides training for members who speak publicly and provide peer support to other families.

In addition to peer support and speaking events, family members assist with distributing safety materials during monthly awareness campaigns held throughout the year . These family members are also known as our safety ambassadors.

Interested in being a volunteer? Contact FHF Coordinator, Faith Turner at 803-896-8171 or email [famili-esoafhwyfatalities@scdps.net](mailto:famili-esoafhwyfatalities@scdps.net)

If you are interested in attending the March Speaker's Training contact FHF Coordinator, Faith Turner at 803-896-8171



Above: Courtney Smith, SCHP, Capt. Gil Owens, SCHP and Amy Dixon of Palmetto Health Baptist smile for a quick photograph.

*Support...Fellowship...Safety Education*



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## FHF members speak to nearly 6,000 soldiers sending our safety message around the world.

In front of an audience of 5,996 soldiers over a three day span, four of our FHF members shared their personal story to new enlistees and command staff at Ft. Jackson military base in the Solomon Center during the month of December. By doing this we know we are sending a message that will now travel around the world, as these soldiers are given their first assignment orders relocating them to many different parts of the world.

You hear the sound of heavy boots and voices of courage as battalions chant their personalized cadence at the Sergeant who stands in front of them giving orders as they all march in to the auditorium. Then as FHF member, and speaker Jon-Erik Hartfield uses a walker and slowly approaches the podium and opens his speech with "I once was normal like each of you." the crowd becomes silent enough to hear a pin drop as Jon-Erik continues to recall what he remembers the night he was hit head on by a drunk driver. Jon-Erik was one of four speakers to speak to the many soldiers.



*Above: FHF member Jon-Erik Hartfield with SCHP L/Cpl. Scot Edgeworth as he begins his story.*

*Bottom left: Cindy Sease shakes the hand of a soldier who thanks her for her courage to speak about losing her daughter Kelsey Schumpert in 2006. Bottom middle: Mike Sease holds the memory board to allow soldiers to look at several pictures that tell the life of Kelsey. Bottom right: Becky Kopp listens to a soldier as he tells the impact her story about her younger brother Jonathan Hall.*





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## "Tragedy and Faith" Peer Support Meeting was held in Columbia on January 23rd.



This first time peer support meeting held to specifically discuss tragedy and faith allowed family members to openly share the difficulties of their personal faith after having such a tragic event such as losing a loved one shake their foundation. For some it is facing tragedy and finding faith, for others it is questioning the faith you knew before the tragedy, and for some it is trying to keep true to that faith you have always known. What ever your faith in the midst of your journey in such a politically correct society, we offered a peer support meeting where family members were allowed to talk about their journey and how faith played a role.

Listening to the needs of the family members, we held this meeting in Columbia at the Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church. The meeting was facilitated by Rev. Eric Skidmore, State Police Chaplain, along with Debbie Clark, a licensed social worker and Dr. Paul Van Wyke, local clinical psychologist. Family members expressed sincere gratitude for having such an open forum to share on this topic, Beth Livingston, stated that "I have never been more comfortable to share than when I am with my FHF family." Beth became active within the FHF program after losing her son William Snell in 2008.



FHF member Cheryl Jones, (2nd to left) offers peer support to new members Virginia Kemp (1st on left) Beth Coleman Hetzel (3rd on right) along with her daughter Heather Hetzel (far right) who all came together to better understand the journey after losing loved one, Jonathan "Red" Coleman in October of 2009. Cheryl lost her son Brandon and is able to share first hand suggestions that has allowed her to cope and to experience some healing since that tragic day in 2003.

Personal Reflection from Beth Coleman Hetzel, Mother of Jonathan "Red" Coleman and FHF member during the "Tragedy and Faith" Peer Support Meeting:

"We have good moments and bad hours. But with time, hope and healing, we will have good hours and bad moments."



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# Photo Gallery— FHF Activities



Father and son, Jim and Brian Waters share a moment after the volunteer luncheon.



Taking a break during the seminar, couples both from Lancaster, SC., Ned and Margaret Blackmon along with Lois and Sal Rao enjoy each other's support.



Kendal Shelley gives a friendly hug to member and friend Barbara Weston at the luncheon.



Amy L. Dixon, nationally Board-Certified Music Therapist encourages music as part of a healing tool in the journey of grief.



Diane Best finds support from friend Cheryl Jones at annual luncheon.



Sisters, Denise Gowan and Donna Bishop talk with Carol Kiparisus, as Carol shares her recently published book and how she has coped after losing her son John Gregory in 2003.



Calhoun Rabon enjoys lunchtime at the January meeting. Child care is offered at many events.



Cindy Sease shares a smile with husband Mike, as they join in on the musical section of the seminar.



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# FAMILIES OF HIGHWAY FATALITIES

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## New members

Otis Badger, Charleston  
Rev. Lewis and Candy Brown, Charleston  
Deffney Campbell, Lancaster  
Shama Ford, Berkeley  
Kris Hart, Spartanburg  
Beth and Heather Hetzel, Blythewood  
Virginia Kemp, Blythewood  
Wesley, Haley and Calhoun Rabon, Berkeley  
Patricia Witherspoon, Lynchburg

John Bowles, Lexington  
Wendy Burns, Lexington  
Jeannie Chafin, Kershaw  
Mary Germany, Richland  
Jon-Erik Hartfield, Greenville  
Roland Hill, Greenville  
Tarra McCravin, Richland  
Willie Robinson, Lynchburg  
Melvin and Candy Wright, Richland

## *Our Mission:*

*Our goal is to provide Peer Support for grieving families; facilitate forums and opportunities for grieving families to meet; prevent further highway fatalities through public education and information; and to diligently work alongside law enforcement, first responders, and other government officials as advocates for highway safety.*

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**February 20th :** 2nd Annual Chili - Craft Peer Support Function will be held at North Trenholm Baptist Church @ 6505 North Trenholm Drive in Columbia from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**March 6th:** Speaker Bureau Training Class will be held at 10311 Wilson Blvd., from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m.

**April 24th :** Annual Fatality Memorial Service will be held at Riverland Hills Baptist Church located at 201 Lake Murray Blvd in Irmo. Service starts at 10 a.m. Remembering loved ones lost in 2009.



Have you posted a memorial to your loved one on our web site yet? If not, please log on to [www.schp.org/inmemoryof](http://www.schp.org/inmemoryof) to share with others about the very special family member you lost on South Carolina highways.

For inquiries regarding the non-profit, FHF Assistance Program Inc., or to donate, please contact Mr. Sal Rao at Post Office Box 916, Blythewood, SC, 29016, or [FHFINCI100@yahoo.com](mailto:FHFINCI100@yahoo.com)