

Now Hopebuilders

Background

For more than 70 years staff members of **Hooper-Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home & Cremation Services** have walked with families through the beginning of their grief journey by helping them commemorate the loss of their loved one and providing support through some very difficult days. It has been our privilege, but also our challenge, to serve families facing life without their loved one. We know there are difficult days ahead when family members return home, the cards, letters and phone calls cease and loved ones are left to navigate the grief process. We have always felt the need to provide ongoing support for family members and have used several different methods over the years to meet this need.

Our experience with aftercare has led us to believe the most effective way to offer ongoing, community-based grief support for all age groups is by establishing a grief center. In 2008, we helped found *Heart of the Cumberland*, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing peer group support for children, teens and their families. Last year, *Heart of the Cumberland (HOTC)* hosted peer-based support groups for 152 participants at its center in Cookeville, Tennessee, and 122 participants in 7 Putnam County schools. The groups are facilitated by approximately 50 trained volunteers who help participants know they are not alone in the journey through grief. HOTC's vision for 2010-2011 is to help an estimated 250 participants at the Center and 400 students in schools.

Hopebuilders

Jill Horner of Hooper-Huddleston & Horner is a founder and Treasurer of HOTC. Our firm is involved in HOTC's mission in several ways. We are hosting our second annual event for area ministers and their wives to help launch HOTC's **HopeBuilders Initiative**, spotlighting ways individuals, churches and businesses can inspire hope in children, teens and their families who have experienced loss.

The speaker at this year's luncheon will be Patrick Doughtie, author of the book and movie "Letters to God," based on a true story of a family's struggle to cope with the demands of single-parenting, illness and death. The ultimate message in the movie is one of faith, family and hope even in the most difficult circumstances. The luncheon will be a prelude to a community-wide event that will help communicate the **HopeBuilders** theme.

Building on the theme of writing “Letters to God” as introduced in the movie, event attendees will be encouraged to write a letter of appreciation to the those people who brought hope to their own lives. They will be challenged to “pay it forward” by using their time, talent and treasure to build hope in others through HOTC.

The **HopeBuilders Initiative** will build a strong foundation, promote community involvement, and provide resources to fund HOTC’s vision for 2010-2011. It will also provide the newly developed age-appropriate program of support for use in Center groups and School groups.

As a family-owned funeral home our calling is to support families. Our commitment to HOTC demonstrates a way to involve our staff and our family members in volunteer efforts that demonstrate those values. It is our mission to build a legacy of demonstrating the value of funeral service, community involvement and peer group support by helping families thrive through the most difficult losses.